

# BOSTON COLLEGE

SUMMER 2015

## MAGAZINE



## PILGRIMS

A philosophy professor, a Jesuit, 10 students, and a graduate student packing first-aid take a 215-mile walk

BY ZACHARY JASON '11

# PROLOGUE

## BETH-EL

There's no accurate count of pilgrimage sites on this planet, and even some regional or national estimates, particularly in Asia and Africa, tend to be only that. But there are certainly enough to go around. Of course the world-famous destinations—whose names invariably read like poetry—are easily reckoned up: Borobudur, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, Medina, Walden, Yerushalayim (Jerusalem's lovelier birth name), Hagia Sophia, Lourdes, Bethlehem, Kumbh Mela (a Hindu site that saw 10 million pilgrims bathe in the Ganges over the course of one April day in 2010), Stonehenge, Shikoku (88 Buddhist temples along the pilgrim way), Kataragama, Canterbury, El Santuario de Chimayo (where the prize is healing soil), etc.

Hundreds of sacred destinations are said to be scattered across India. Some are centers of devotion for Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim believers, and some are centers that serve all three at once. The Indonesian island of Java is also said to contain hundred of sites, which include buildings, ruins, graves, particular rocks, or a grove of trees. In Australia it's believed that there are places in the bush sacred to Aborigines that no one but an Aborigine has yet seen.

Young as it is, the United States can hardly be expected to compete well by volume or density, but we certainly don't lack for pilgrim destinations. Religious shrines are scattered across our country, their billboards or fencepost advertisements hallowing our highways. And though it's in downtown Grafton, West Virginia (pop. 5,182), and not on a highway, let's not neglect the International Mother's Day Shrine; nor, in the Fillmore District, the St. John Coltrane African Orthodox Church; nor the Padre Pio shrine hidden in a church at 210 West 31st Street in New York City, between a branch of the Astoria Bank and the Cafe 31 Sports Bar and Grill; or the town of Sedona, Arizona, the Rome of New Age believers, whose red rock buttes are home to no less than four "power vortexes," which I've seen defined as "powerful eddies of pure Earth power manifest as spiral-like coagulations of energy that are either electric, magnetic, or electromagnetic qualities of life force," whatever that may be. And for the Older Agers, Sedona offers a modernist wood and glass Catholic chapel that also perches on the buttes but doesn't lay claim to a vortex, though it does feature a formidable gift shop, as has been the tradition at pilgrim sites in Europe since the early

Middle Ages. And who can say that our pilgrim sites don't also include the Lincoln Memorial, Gettysburg, Dealey Plaza, and Graceland, whose eternal flame, meditation garden, music performances, tomb vigils, and relics (cars, clothes, and racquetball court) draw 600,000 visitors per year, some of whom leave behind images of the saint and requests for intercessions, and some of whom get to their knees to pinch bits of soil or a pebble for transport home to Kalamazoo or Tokyo?

Genesis tells the story of wandering Jacob, sleeping one night in some wilderness—"a certain place," says the Bible unhelpfully—and dreaming of a ladder to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. "Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.'" And with the ease of a patriarch who strode a world still young enough to offer naming opportunities at every turn, Jacob called the place *Beth-El* (yet another lovely sound), meaning "house of God."

A very practical theologian of the 19th century whose name was Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk was once asked, "Where does God live?" And he replied, "God lives where man lets Him." And so holy places proliferate, whether we recognize them at first sight or on waking after a dream or suddenly, years after the vision, as a place of dislocation from which we emerged changed, even blessed.

I knew a married couple years ago who were in relaxed doughy middle age when they encountered a problem. I seem to recall it was financial, though it might have been teenage kids. But it troubled their marriage. And so they decided they would train for and run the Boston Marathon together.

And on Marathon Monday I walked to Beacon Street, to the 24-mile mark or thereabouts, to cheer them as they went by. It was late in the day, but there were still runners coming through and a few youngish folk on the sidewalk holding beer bottles behind their backs and calling "You can DO it!" I waited a bit and saw them. They were jogging slowly beside each other. When they were about 10 yards away I moved up toward the barrier and saw that the woman's eyes were closed and her husband's head was down and they were holding hands. I stayed silent where I was as they came through. I would have named the place, but it was already named.

Our story on pilgrim progress begins on page 16.

—BEN BIRNBAUM

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# LETTERS

## STAGECRAFT

Re "Make 'Em Laugh," by Janelle Nanos '02 (Spring 2015): It is terrific that comedy writer Tracey Wigfield '05 is doing so well professionally—she deserves it. Tracey is wonderfully witty, but she is also strong in her values and quietly wise. Effective comedy involves making observations about life from a disarming angle that audiences instantly recognize as accurate. At its best, it is the telling of truths. Tracey acted in two of my productions at Boston College and also did an independent study with me, of which I remember more laughter than talk.

While a freshman, she played middle-aged Mrs. Sun in Brecht's *Good Person of Setzuan*. The following year I cast her as the long-suffering wife Charlotte in the musical *A Little Night Music*: a tough role to play. Tracey coolly landed her comic lines, poisonous and ironic, with exquisite timing, then melted into poignant vulnerability as she sang "Every Day a Little Death." Whatever the role, she was all in: always thinking and feeling on stage, always discovering something new, playing off the other actors, engaged in each and every moment while maintaining her character's larger wants and needs.

Stuart Hecht  
Boston College

*The writer is an associate professor of theater.*

## CORE VALUES

Re "Shaping the Core," by William Bole (Spring 2015): Having been on the committees that developed revisions of Boston College's core curriculum in 1970 and 1991, I was delighted to read about the current effort.

The 1970 conversation was significant in that it affirmed the traditional intellectual content of the University's core at a time when the very idea of a core was being abandoned elsewhere. It also supported the development of imaginative alternative versions of the core such as the Perspectives program, the PULSE

program, and the A&S Honors Program curriculum.

The 1991 core document was an advance in several ways. Significantly, it offered a nuanced philosophy of an integrated core and created the position of core director and a standing committee with the power to review existing core courses and approve new ones consistent with the document's vision. A weakness of the 1991 plan, however, was that it left whatever integrating would happen to the individual student and faculty member.

The current plan seems a significant improvement in two ways. It envisions a series of courses that create connections across subject areas and require students and faculty from different areas to collaborate in using multiple competencies to address the material. Second—and perhaps this is its most revolutionary innovation—it aims to extend the core experience across all four undergraduate years by a series of courses and other experiences that challenge the student to progressively deeper modes of reflection, both about the subject matter of courses and about the student's own developing identity as a learner and as a human being. That is an ambitious and attractive project, indeed!

Joseph Appleyard, SJ, '53, P.H.L.'58, H'12  
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

*The writer is the former vice president for University Mission and Ministry.*

We read with interest the article on Boston College's renewed core curriculum. As we at Fairfield University undertook a comprehensive analysis of our core curriculum last academic year, a focus on integrated thinking, team-teaching, and experiential learning were also recurring themes in our discussions. Boston College, in reimagining the core, has taken to heart the statement of Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, that "depth of thought and imagination in the Ignatian tradition involves a profound

engagement with the real." The soul/goal of the core, at a Catholic Jesuit institution, is to provide a transformative experience for students so that they in turn can transform the world for the good. Boston College's innovative approach to the core provides an exciting and intellectually challenging opportunity for faculty and students to achieve this objective.

Mary Frances Malone  
Christine Siegel  
Fairfield University  
Fairfield, Connecticut

*The writers are associate vice presidents for academic affairs and co-chairs of Fairfield University's core curriculum committee.*

The work by the core team was superb. One course, however, is missing: a history from the Big Bang to atoms, cells, organisms, Australopithecus, early civilization, the rise of language and music, and on to the present. Google "big history." This subject is on its way into universities.

Severyn Bruyn  
Newton Centre, Massachusetts

*The writer is a professor emeritus of sociology.*

#### AT THE FORUM

In "Trade Show" (Spring 2015), William Bole uses illuminating examples from professor Mark Bradshaw's recent Bartunek Faculty Research Forum presentation to illustrate important cross-disciplinary benefits of the forum and emphasize how it strengthens the research culture at the Carroll School of Management (CSOM). Bole highlights how the exchange of ideas helps keep the audience abreast of developments in other departments and provides the presenter with fresh insights from colleagues with diverse perspectives. Also, presenters often get an opportunity to explain and defend their research prior to being considered for promotion.

This and other collaborative initiatives undertaken during the past decade by dean Andrew Boynton and the CSOM research and teaching committees have significantly enhanced the feedback faculty receive and the ways our performance is evaluated during annual reviews and promotion and tenure decisions. For example, the research and teaching committees have

developed comprehensive annual reports to help faculty gauge their performance relative to colleagues in their departments and across CSOM. This has allowed us increasingly to attract, support, and retain highly innovative colleagues.

G. Peter Wilson  
Boston College

*The writer holds the Joseph L. Sweeney Chair of Accounting.*

#### HIGH NOTES

Re "Mashup," by Andrew Skaras '15 (Spring 2015): As a former Heightmen president I recall my last song selection meeting, and remember how hard this process can be. It was 2011, and just like any red-blooded, 21-year old male, I was obsessed with Fox's musical comedy-drama *Glee*. My main submission was *Glee*'s all-male cover of Katy Perry's "Teenage Dream." Although, shockingly, my submission was out-voted in favor of Eddie Money's "Take Me Home Tonight" (which ended up being a fan favorite), I appreciated that each member took the time to really consider every submission, despite his own musical preferences. With an all-male group whose fan base is predominantly female, this is paramount. The Heightmen consistently want to give the audience an exceptional show. They are singers, turned friends, turned brothers, each of whom has a voice without which the group could not exist. From this article it's clear the current group continues to embody these traditions.

Sean Reardon '11  
Needham, Massachusetts

#### HEALING ARTS

Re "Side Effects," by Meghan Leahy '15 (Spring 2015), as well as the launch of the *Medical Humanities Journal of Boston College*: The words shaped by disease are tight and exclusive, self-protected and demanding. One needs a window into them. Better yet, one needs someone able to serve as a guide with respect and care, with gentleness and skill. Hence, personal narratives are indispensable.

Personal accounts of disease and disability become healing opportunities for the people affected, for family members, for healthcare professionals, even for readers. In such stories, one discovers the other as very familiar. Readers experience an empathy that bridges distances and differences, and they join the writers in the lifelong healing process—whether it is physical or spiritual or relational healing that both writers and readers are wanting. For their part, in sharing their stories of suffering and healing, frustration and achievement, despair and hope, the writers continue their complex and multifaceted healing.

Andrea Vicini, SJ  
Boston College

*The writer is an associate professor of moral theology at the School of Theology and Ministry.*

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—DAVID MCCULLOUGH, H'08

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# Lipden Lane

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## CAMPUS DIGEST

In late May, the Connell School of Nursing (CSON) moved from Cushing Hall, its home since the building opened in 1960, to new space on the second and third floors of Maloney Hall, where CSON will occupy **35,000 square feet** (an increase of 78 percent) including the 12-bed Brown Family Clinical Learning Laboratory, five examination rooms, and a simulation laboratory where events from births to deaths can be staged using computer-driven dummies. ✖ A new program called 3+3 will allow qualified Boston College undergraduates to enter the Law School following their junior year, earn a bachelor's degree after their first year of law school and a **law degree** two years later. ✖ On May 18, at the University's **139th Commencement**, 3,486 students received undergraduate or advanced degrees. Chicago Archbishop Blase Joseph Cupich delivered the Commencement address. The other honorands were: Marie Chin, RSM, vicar for religious for the Archdiocese of Kingston, Jamaica; Michael Motyl '01, president of the Guadalupe Regional Middle School (tuition-free and Catholic) in Brownsville, Texas; Steve Pemberton '89, a former corporate diversity officer, motivational speaker, and author of *A Chance in the World*—which is also the name of his nonprofit to aid young people who age out of foster care; and Lee Woodruff, CBS journalist, author of *In an Instant: A Family's Journey of Love and Healing*, and co-founder of the Bob

Woodruff Foundation to aid wounded veterans. ✖ Eight faculty members traveled to **Turkey** in June as part of an effort to investigate research and study opportunities for University faculty and students. ✖ BC Clean, a program of the Office of Residential Life that recycles students' unwanted goods to local charities, reported the following **year-end donations**: 2,335 pounds of non-perishable food (Society of St. Vincent DePaul); 15,940 pounds of clothing, 657 lamps, and 145 microwaves (Household Goods); and 4,800 books (More Than Words). ✖ School of Theology and Ministry associate professor **Andrea Vicini, SJ**, was named a 2015–16 research fellow by the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey. He will join a team of 11 theologians and social scientists for a yearlong "Inquiry on the Societal Implications of Astrobiology." ✖ The *New York Times's* April 26 listing of nuptials included a reference to Mathilda McGee-Tubb, JD'13, and Peter Grieco '06, who was for three years "the college's sports mascot, **Baldwin**, a bald eagle." ✖ In the Above the Law blog ranking of the top 50 U.S. law schools (based on American Bar Association employment statistics for the class of 2014), Boston College **Law School** moved up five places to number 16. ✖ Under the defunct plan of the Boston 2024 bid committee, Conte Forum was to host **Olympic wrestling** and Olympic and Paralympic judo. ✖ Dan Bunch '79,



**SEDIMENTAL**—Associate professor of earth and environmental sciences Noah Snyder (left) has begun a two-year, National Science Foundation-funded study to gauge the “human modification of land in the northeastern U.S.”—a project that supported two undergraduate and two graduate research assistants this summer. Above, Kaitlin Johnson, MS’16 (center), positions a high-precision GPS device and Elisabeth Ames, MS’17, bags sediment for radiocarbon dating, along the Souhegan River in Merrimack, New Hampshire, on July 20. Snyder says he has found that “a number of natural-looking river valleys are actually the product of erosion caused by sedimentation behind dams and clearing of forests in the 18th and 19th centuries.”

MSW’81, was honored with the 2015 **Community Service Award**, given to a Boston College employee who embodies the Jesuit spirit of service to others. The director of the University’s Learning to Learn program since 1987, Bunch was lauded for his mentoring efforts with first-generation, low-income, or under-represented students. ✂ Under new rules passed in January by the NCAA, Division I schools can include incidental costs of attendance (cellphone bills, transportation home) in **athletic scholarships**. Boston College, which was the lone opponent of the change, arguing the guidelines for determining the “cost of attendance” numbers are ambiguous and could create an unfair recruiting tool, calculates its additional amount at \$1,400; the University of Tennessee sets the stipend at \$5,668. ✂ To assist members of the Class

of 2019 in navigating the complexities of **Welcome Week**, the Office of Student Services has launched an app that presents schedules of events, campus maps, dining information, and an FAQ section including answers to questions such as “How/where can I print on campus?” “I ordered linens from the bookstore—when and where do I pick them up?” and “What are some helpful BC Lingo terms I should know?” (Answers include the Plex, the Quad, the Rat, and the Res.) ✂ Assistant professor of physics Ruihua He and two members of the mathematics department—assistant professor John Baldwin and professor Joshua Greene—have been awarded five-year **National Science Foundation CAREER** awards, the organization’s premier award in support of junior faculty who exemplify the role of teacher/scholar.

✂ The Center for **Christian-Jewish Learning** announced that the University of Ottawa’s Adele Reinhartz, a scholar of the New Testament and early Jewish-Christian relations, will be the 2015–16 Corcoran Visiting Chair in Christian-Jewish Relations. ✂ U.S. District Judge **George A. O’Toole Jr.**, ‘69, in his statement prior to the sentencing of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, said “You tried to justify [the Marathon bombing] to yourself by redefining what it is to be an innocent person so that you could convince yourself that Martin Richard was not innocent . . . and, therefore, [he] could be, should be killed. . . . To accomplish it, you had to redefine yourself as well. You had to forget your own humanity, the common humanity that you shared with your brother Martin.” —Thomas Cooper



FROM LEFT: Volpe '14, Canfield '12, Mitropoulos '12, MA'15, JD'15, and Lewis at the American Literary Association conference.

# Citizen scholars

By William Bole

A book project shows the fruits of undergraduate research

Approximately 1,200 literature professors arrived in downtown Boston on Thursday, May 21, for the four-day annual conference of the American Literary Association, which describes itself as a "coalition of societies devoted to the study of American authors." Scholars from institutions ranging from Cornell and Bucknell to the Universities of Chicago and Michigan gathered in small meeting rooms of the Westin Copley Hotel, attending and taking part in panel discussions around such American masters as Dickinson, Faulkner, and Thoreau. That day, the presentation at noon in room A of the St. George suite was thus unconventional. Dedicated to recently discovered poetry of the early American republic, the session featured three young people whose research had been conducted while they were Boston College undergraduates.

Kristin Canfield '12, Nicholas Volpe '14, and Alexandra Mitropoulos '12,

MA'15, JD'15, comprised three quarters of the panel on "The Citizen Poets of Boston, 1789–1820." That is also the title of a forthcoming book, subtitled *A Collection of Forgotten Poems*; they and 14 other Boston College students produced the volume with English professor Paul Lewis, who joined the three at the front of the room.

Due out from University Press of New England in March 2016, the book has its roots in EN619, an undergraduate course first taught by Lewis in the fall of 2011. In that original seminar, titled "Forgotten Chapters of Boston's Literary History," 12 students (who had started the work as summer research fellows) went sifting through digital archives for poems to feature in an exhibition of the same name, to be held at the Boston Public Library in Copley Square from March to July 2012. (Lewis, with just a few students, had previously curated a three-month exhibition at the library titled *The Raven in the*

*Frog Pond: Edgar Allan Poe and the City of Boston*, opening in December 2009.) "Forgotten Chapters" led to the citizen-poets book, with Lewis as editor. He has dedicated the book to the 17 student researchers.

Throughout the project, the students reviewed thousands of poems that appeared in 59 Boston magazines during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Most of the works were published anonymously, as was the custom at the time; most were penned by amateur, or "citizen," poets. Lewis calls the students' work a project of "literary archeology." Turning up to hear more about it were some two dozen scholars who filled the meeting room.

INTRODUCING THE PANELISTS SEATED at a rectangular table was Scott Reznick, a Boston College doctoral candidate specializing in 19th-century American literature. He noted that the literary canon of America "has grown exponentially in recent decades," beginning with attention paid to neglected groups of writers including women and African-Americans. Now, he said, the idea of what constitutes American literature is broadening further with the "online access to long-forgotten texts," owing to the rapid growth of digital databases such as HathiTrust, Archive of Americana, and the American Periodical Series.

Lewis was the first panelist to approach the rostrum, and he acknowledged that most of the approximately 4,500 works inspected by the students would not stand the literary test of time. (In an interview, he put it more plainly: "Just because a poem has been neglected doesn't mean that it's worth recovering.") As to the 163 poems included in the upcoming collection, Lewis used words such as "unpretentious," "intimate," and "revealing" to describe them. These verses, he said, give the contemporary reader a glimpse of life in old Boston, in its shops, streets, taverns, schools, and homes.

On a screen to his left, he displayed the dozen lines of a poem titled "Boston Hogs," published in an 1819 edition of *New-England Galaxy and Masonic Magazine*. The anonymous poet favorably compares local pigs to their porcine counterparts in New York City:

Thus New York swine are lank and lean;  
Bostonian, sleek, and fat and clean;

After reading the full text aloud, Lewis said, if "you think Red Sox fans invented the Boston–New York feud, note that it could be traced back to Colonial times."

Speaking next was Mitropoulos, who was having a busy week. She'd received a master's degree in higher education at Commencement three days before and would attend her Law School graduation ceremony the following day, having taken part in a joint program of the Lynch School of Education and Boston College Law School.

Mitropoulos delved into two poems that she identified as "feminist voices" in the anthology. The first, "There's No Law for Thee" (in *Boston Weekly Magazine*, 1803), tells of the author's violently abusive alcoholic husband ("calm submission aggravates my grief, / Prolongs my woes, extends my misery"). The law-school graduate's analysis included a survey of state laws and court rulings across the young republic permitting husbands to whip and otherwise thrash their wives. The second poem was "Lines Written by a Lady Who Was Questioned Respecting Her Inclination to Marry" (*Massachusetts Magazine*, 1794)—"which I'll read out loud," Mitropoulos told her audience, "because I think it's so fabulous."

Like a haughty republic my heart with  
disdain  
Views the edicts of Hymen and laughs at  
his chain,  
Abhors his tyrannical systems and modes  
His bastiles, his shackles, his maxims and  
codes....

"Using motifs from the French and American revolutions," Mitropoulos summarized, "she [the author] describes wedlock as a system of oppression meant to bind and suppress women."

Taking her turn at the rostrum, Canfield—who entered a Ph.D. program in English this past fall at the University of Texas at Austin—dissected a poem titled "Lines on the Elm Tree, Which for Many Years Has Been the Ornament of Court Street, and Was Cut Down at the Beginning of this Month," published in 1805 by *Monthly Anthology*. In recent

decades, she said, literary critics have tended to dismiss or downplay the value of local and regional writing, favoring literature with transnational and multicultural resonances. "What does it mean, she asked, "to focus on the local, the specific, and even the mundane?" Canfield concluded that the sudden emergence and accessibility of local archives is "complicating the ongoing globalization of the American literary canon."

At the start of the final presentation, Volpe—who majored in international studies and English and works in commercial real estate in Hartford, Connecticut—told conference-goers that his subject matter would veer toward murder, treachery, and war. "So buckle up," he advised.

Volpe drew attention to a poem originally published in England but significantly revised by a Boston editor at *Christian Disciple* for republication in 1806. Titled "Extracts From Fawcett's Contrast," the bracingly radical poem addresses war-making heads of state: "Yourselves most criminal of all!" A team of students including Volpe traced the verse to a British clergyman / poet named Joseph Fawcett. Equating war between nations with mur-

der committed by individuals, the two versions of the work reveal a "developing pattern of transatlantic pacifist communication" in the earliest decades of the United States, Volpe said.

During the question-and-answer segment of the 90-minute program, a man in a light blue suit spoke up. He did not identify himself, but some in the room knew him to be David Sloane, a scholar of American humor and professor at the University of New Haven. "I've been studying this stuff for 40 years, and I know what you have accomplished is truly valuable and remarkable," he said, leading his fellow academics in sustained applause.

Like some of the other 14 students involved, the young panelists had continued to help Lewis with the project and manuscript after graduating. In addition to Volpe, Canfield, and Mitropoulos, they were: Sean Cahill '13, Jaimie Carvalho '16, Nicholas Clements '12, Kelsie Dorn '12, Jennifer Fuksman '14, Elizabeth Gavin '14, Caroline M. Kirkwood '15, Kristen House '12, Michael Kadow '14, Harrison Kent '13, Erica Navarro '13, Elizabeth M. Powers '14, Tracy Rizk '12, and Meidema Sanchez '13. ■

## Survey says

By Thomas Cooper

What are the liberal arts worth?

In summer 2014, some 6,300 Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences (MCAS) alumni from the classes 2003 through 2012 received an online survey from the University's Office of Institutional Research, Planning, & Assessment (IRPA). In 21 questions, graduates were asked to rate their liberal arts experience (MCAS students constitute 66 percent of the University's undergraduate population) in terms of the connection of their major to their current work; the relevance of their courses to their "personal / professional success"; and whether or not

they would recommend the education they received at Boston College to future students.

The liberal arts curriculum has become a mark for critics of American higher education, in the past decade or so. Articles with headlines such as "College Grads Need Skills, not Liberal Arts" (by a nano-scientist, in *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*) and "How Liberal Arts Colleges are Failing America" (a venture capitalist's call for entrepreneurship training in the *Atlantic*) join politicians including President Obama (a political science major at Columbia

University) in suggesting that, for today's challenging job climate, the liberal arts curriculum may not provide sufficiently marketable skills. This isn't the first wave of concern to wash over the liberal arts, to be sure: See, for instance, "Dr. Cottrell Says 4-year Liberal Arts Type Is Disappearing" in the July 30, 1931, *New York Times*.

Some 2,000 MCAS alumni responded to the survey (a statistically solid return according to Jessica Greene, director of institutional research and assessment at IRPA). A little more than 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed that Boston College faculty had furthered their "intellectual growth and interest in ideas," and just over 81 percent felt their professors had contributed to their "personal growth, values, and attitudes." But there was less consensus on whether faculty had influenced "career goals and aspirations," with 60.7 percent answering yes. Just over 50 percent said their majors were moderately or directly related to their current jobs; among alumni in graduate programs the alignment was higher, 60.3 percent.

As to how they would advise a high school senior or undergraduate today, 90 percent said they would definitely or probably recommend Boston College; 85 percent said they would recommend MCAS, and 76 percent said they would endorse their major. So strong were these allegiances that the ratios were largely unaffected by the amount of student debt the respondents had incurred.

THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY, ALUMNI were invited to provide additional comments. More than 1,000 took the opportunity to explain what they valued about the MCAS experience. Many focused on the analytical skills they had gained, with one graduate writing, "The program taught me to distill critical information from long and complex reading assignments and then to form and articulate those points to convey an argument or hypothesis as part of a group discussion. I was an investment banker and now work in a private equity firm. This is a critical skill-set for forming investment opinions and conveying the merits of an investment thesis to our investment committee." Another commented that the liberal arts curriculum "teaches you not to just solve for Y, but to consider the possibility that Y isn't even the answer, but that it maybe is X or Z."

Respondents rated strong communication skills—verbal and written—among the most important contributors to "personal / professional success" (out of 17 skills proposed by the survey, including "analyzing various types of data" and "getting along with differing opinions"). Not surprisingly, this emphasis figured prominently in the comments. "Despite the disdain directed toward the humanities in general," one graduate wrote, "well-written emails are incredibly valuable and, sadly, an all-too-rare commodity. It turns out that my ability to write well and easily (as a result, at least in part, of the practice I

had as an English major) has, by far, been my most marketable skill."

In general, the core curriculum came in for praise. One graduate wrote, "Now that I am in the working world and around people who went to specialized schools (tech or otherwise), I realize the great benefit of having gone through the core at Boston College. I find it easy to accept new ideas and challenges to existing ideas because I was trained to be a critic, trained to observe and . . . dissect and explore, reason and argue effectively."

Another respondent: "I appreciate that I wasn't groomed for any particular job or given a set of skills that would only be relevant for a short period. I believe my education at Boston College gave me the skills to read, write, think, speak, and communicate for any generation and work force."

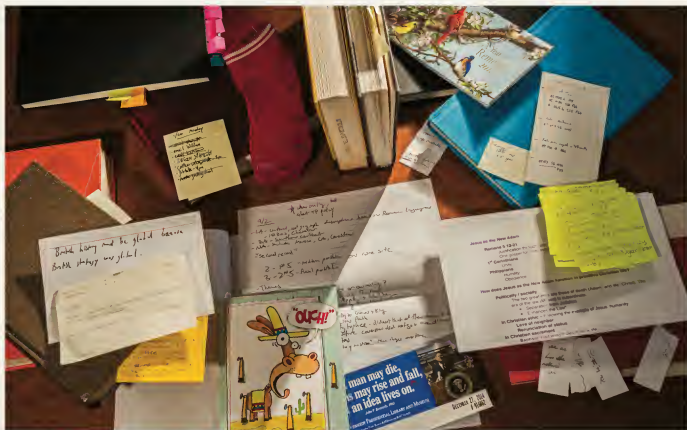
THE SURVEY ALSO DIRECTLY INVITED respondents to write what they considered, in hindsight, to be missing from their undergraduate education, and to suggest improvements. Here, almost 1,100 alumni weighed in. In addition to incremental improvements—"better advising," "continue to prioritize diversity"—their recommendations included technology training "as part of the core"; and "career services that focus on non-traditional fields." Hundreds of comments touched on the need for coaching as to "how an A&S degree can be used to pursue various careers," with one writer commenting, "A&S needs to create a better balance between pure academic inquiry and career preparation." And scores of alumni echoed the respondent who wrote, "I wish I had been required to take a finance or business course. . . . You don't have to be an accountant to benefit from understanding the basics of running a company or understanding the culture."

Based on the "constructive feedback," says interim Morrissey College dean Gregory Kalschauer, SJ, he, Career Center director Joseph Du Pont, department chairs, and undergraduate studies directors are "discussing how we might help students to better understand the ways their education provides a strong foundation in the qualities employers value." The objective: to help students "connect their liberal arts education with meaningful career paths." ■

## To what extent do you identify with . . . ?



In a survey of recent MCAS graduates, respondents answering "a great deal" or "a fair amount."



Found by librarians between the pages of books returned to O'Neill.

## CLOSE-UP: REMAINDERED

In answer to a query from *BCM*, staff at O'Neill Library collected the items they found tucked in books and other library returns to the circulation desk over five weeks at the end of the spring semester. They recorded the following unclaimed objects: a packet of Boston Bean French vanilla coffee (abandoned in the pages of *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*); a lady's sock (pink, accompanying a borrowed iPad); boarding passes (two, Boston to Chicago, different dates, different books); subway cards (Boston, New York); a pass to the JFK Library; and photographs (e.g., of a brown-haired toddler grinning next to a globe the height of his ears).

There were printed communications: a Christmas card from the Johnstons; the business card of a student-conduct manager (Office of the Dean of Students); a store-bought birthday card from "Dad" (and inside, hand-scrawled, "I put an additional 'Allowance' in your account").

But the majority of found items were just pieces of paper with writing on them:

- A to-do list dated January 26. "Email William," "Email Kathleen" (crossed out), "BEGIN SPANISH."
- Four lines on a sheet of notebook paper. "Andrew" / "Jesuit motto—Service & Excellence" / "Different than Canada" / "Challenge & Opportunities."
- A temptation. "Hi! I'm Olaf! Stop studying in Bapst and go out and give someone a nice warm hug on this beautiful day!" (above the message, a sketch in ink of the snowman from the movie *Frozen*).
- On an index card. "1947—British [illegible] US oil interests [illegible] help [illegible] will help fend off [illegible]."
- On a lime-green sticky note. "Pokémon as a commodity of 'play ad travel'."
- Slender slips of paper bearing hand-formed Chinese characters, in ink. 代表 ("representative"); 比基尼 ("bikini"); and 体育人与体育论辩之脱离 ("the separation of the sportsman and the sports debate").

A companion slip, in English, reads, "See as the natives see."

- Attached to a page of Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver*, a yellow mini-sticky note. "Change? 135 no 155 yes."

Books that contributed items to this partial catalogue included:

- Civil Defense Begins At Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*
- Christ Our Companion: Toward a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation*
- Am I Thin Enough Yet?: The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialization of Identity*
- Protestant Theology at the Crossroads: How to Face the Crucial Tasks for Theology in the Twenty-First Century*
- Computational Algebraic Geometry*
- The Makers of Scotland: Picts, Romans, Gaels, and Vikings*
- Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World*
- Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*
- Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic*

—Carolyn Freeman '17



FROM LEFT: On a Whim's Kim, Merino, Opoku, and Pappas in their first-ever live show.

# Words and guitars

By Zachary Jason

For six hours, the Heights music scene ruled Faneuil Hall

**H**ip-hop performers DJ Maverik and Sha-Lee Flavius were working the crowd, and it was an unusual one for them—toddlers cradling balloon animals, tourists clutching lobster rolls, and a hundred or so other passersby on the brick courtyard between Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market at noon on April 25, a brisk and sunny Saturday. “All my people on the right, make some noise!” shouted Maverik, a.k.a. Kableih Blair ’04, a morning-show host on Jam’n 94.5 FM, Boston’s hip-hop radio station. Flavius ’14, wearing a Santa hat, dark sunglasses, and a flowing black robe, asked, “How y’all feeling on the left?” From two speakers on tripods behind them, a prerecorded bass started thumping alongside a catchy trumpet riff. The toddlers began dancing, and the crowd swelled. It was the launch of an afternoon of music performed by Boston College student and alumni bands and solo acts—27 in all—called Break the Bubble.

The name comes from “BC bubble,” a term that students sometimes use to describe how life on campus can become all-absorbing. The semiannual concert series is the brainchild of John Guzzi ’15, president of the student-run Music Guild, which schedules shows and arranges practice space for undergraduate acts on campus.

In a city known for its music schools (New England Conservatory, Berklee, Boston Conservatory), Guzzi, a biology major, lobbies for “the BC music community” and says, “I wanted us to make a statement.” In September 2013, he submitted an application to the marketing department of Faneuil Hall Marketplace, rustled up a dozen student acts, and held the first Break the Bubble event that fall, during Boston College Parents’ Weekend. Many more bands have since formed on campus, he says, thanks in large part to Jammin’ Toast, a two-year-old student organization in which

musicians gather for weekly “jam” sessions. Last March, Guzzi and four Music Guild officers received recordings from 30 applicants to take part in the Faneuil Hall concerts, from an electronica trio of Carroll School of Management students to a history major / country singer (from Pennsylvania) to a fuzz rock quintet. With a six-hour window and two stages to fill, the guild settled on its finalists, assigning them to 15- and 30-minute sets on the main stage and on a more intimate acoustic stage located at the north side of the marketplace.

MAVERIK AND FLAVIUS TRADED verses on the main stage for 15 minutes. While Maverik stood in place and, with swooping hand gestures, maintained a buttery delivery, Flavius bounded toward the edges of the circle forming around them and shrieked with velocity and fury—“Hey YO, you ain’t NOTHING without that MONEY, HA!”—commanding the attention of a nearby soft-serve ice cream vendor, the Reading Memorial High School girl’s volleyball team, a Segway-mounted security guard across the plaza, and nearly everyone else in hearing distance.

Among the acts to follow was On a Whim, an all-freshmen mellow rock quartet performing live for the first time. As they played their first track, a mid-tempo, acoustic-driven love song called “Other Ones,” singer Emily Merino glanced at the lyrics on her iPhone, and guitarists Byung-Hun Kim and Violet Pappas repeatedly looked up at each other to check their timing. About 10 of their fellow Newton Campus residents, sitting on the concrete steps of the Quincy Market entrance, roared with applause. The band, rounded out by Manny Opoku on drums, loosened up and finished with a tight cover of Sublime’s reggae-inspired “Santeria.”

Fifteen acts performed on the acoustic stage—an eight-foot by 10-foot green and yellow Oriental rug beside a kiosk selling wind chimes. Most sang covers—Katharine Callahan ’17 offered a version of “Landslide” as forlorn as Stevie Nicks’s original. When finance major Tyler Coyne ’17 and nursing student Helena Chavez ’17 made a duet of Taylor Swift’s “Blank Space,” shoppers outside the Sunglass Hut

and Newbury Comics paused to listen. Marketing major Alex Cavanaugh '17 began his set covering Johnny Cash and "Folsom Prison Blues." "This next song is my mom's favorite," he said, pointing to a woman in a Boston College sweatshirt in the front row. As he played "The Sheriff," an original, rollicking travel song, a toddler wearing Spiderman boots and carrying a soft pretzel bigger than his head tossed a five-dollar-bill into Cavanaugh's guitar case. Cavanaugh lifted his aviator sunglasses in acknowledgment.

Most of the musicians and their friends stayed to watch all of the afternoon's acts. These included William Bolton '16, who streamed original prerecorded Motown-flavored tracks from his laptop while playing guitar and singing falsetto; the indie-style band Infidel Castro, in which Guzzi plays lead guitar; and rap duo Phenom V and eZ breeZ, a.k.a. the brothers Emmanuel '18 and McEdward Laguerre '13. The Novel Ideas, a five-member folk band including vocalist and guitarist Daniel Radin '12 and bassist

James Parkington '12, drew the largest crowd of the day. As they performed their 2013 single "The Old Ways," they roused a majority of the 300 or so onlookers to join in the chorus: "Goodbye to the old ways / the old ways are gone." On stages elsewhere around the marketplace—and unrelated to Boston College—a magician, a string quartet, and a marching band played on.

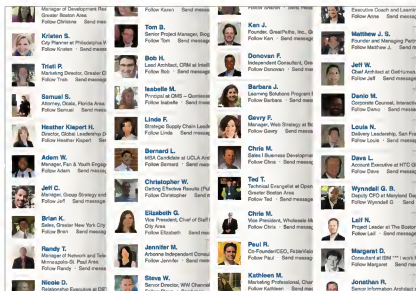
Break the Bubble will return to Faneuil Hall during Parents' Weekend, on Sunday, September 27. ■

## SHE SAID YES

When Justin Thornton '07 decided to propose marriage to Jennifer Castillo '09, JD'12, he wanted to do so on the Heights, where the pair had their first date—a visit to the Labyrinth on Burns Lawn—in her freshman year. Both now live and work in Washington, D.C. He, a finance major, is in real estate development; she, an international studies major (and the Romero Scholar in 2008), is an attorney at an education-focused law firm. Thornton's co-conspirators included Castillo's mother, her sister, Alba, who was a high school senior, and John Mahoney Jr. '79, director of the Office of Undergraduate Admission. Mahoney provided the pretext for the visit to campus by arranging a special "prospective student" tour for Alba. The guide would be Jane Crock '14, a member of the admission staff, in on the plot. On April 4, the unsuspecting Castillo flew to Boston to accompany her sister and mother. Thornton begged off, claiming a business obligation. When Castillo rounded the northeast corner of Gasson Hall and saw him, she was at first irked: He was interrupting Alba's special day. Persuading Castillo that the tour was a set-up took a minute, after which Thornton made his proposal ("short and simple; I didn't want to blow it"). Friends and family on both sides emerged from Gasson to offer congratulations.

—Thomas Cooper





Some of BCCC's 9,000-plus members.

# Job share

By Thomas Cooper

LinkedIn's new Boston College Career Community

In early July, Lindsay Schrier '18, an international studies major with a summer internship at the United Nations Foundation in Washington, D.C., went online to the Boston College Career Community (BCCC), a site on LinkedIn, the 12-year-old business-professionals networking service. She was looking for local alumni with a "background in economics, international affairs, or political science who would grab coffee and chat about some career advice." In the following four days she had eight invitations to meet or talk by phone from alumni working on Capitol Hill, at the General Services Administration, in international agricultural development, and for the State Department.

Schrier is one of more than 9,000 who have signed on as members of BCCC (276 in the nation's capital alone). The site was launched in December by the University's Career Center with assistance from the offices of University Advancement and

News and Public Affairs. The aim, says Joseph Du Pont, vice president for student affairs/career services, is "to create an ecosystem beyond campus, where students can see what a Boston College degree accomplishes, while getting on-the-ground career advice." For alumni, he says, the new site offers an opportunity "to give back—by helping students and, an ancillary benefit, one another."

Dozens of University entities have a presence on LinkedIn, from the Carroll School of Management and the Law School to the Alumni Association. There are scores of others that bear the Boston College moniker but are not sponsored by the University, among them the Boston College Energy and Environment Alumni Network (with 324 members); the Boston College London Alumni (142); and the Friends of the Boston College Golf Team (18). BCCC is the only LinkedIn site dedicated to connecting students and alumni for the purpose of sharing career advice.

Undergraduates—and alumni—can post a query on the BCCC's main discussion board, opening the conversation to all members (recent subject headings include "Advice on career change from finance to higher ed administration," "PR job search advice," "Biology Ph.D. to business"). Or they can search the membership roster by profession or region and correspond privately. Forty-six states and 26 countries are represented, and members run the gamut of occupations—from accounting, investment banking, and food production to pharmaceuticals, information technology, and philanthropy. Assistant director Laura Perrigo notes the Career Center would like to expand the site's reach among international alumni and in certain fields, including entertainment and the arts.

Matt Hartzell '15, an economics major who will enter the sports industry management program at Georgetown University this fall, recently posted a notice seeking advice "on how to break into the industry." Offers of help came shortly from 10 alumni—six on the discussion board, four by private email—including Hilary Wyse '12, a recent Brooklyn Law School graduate who has worked for the National Hockey League and Excel Sports Management; from Geoff Spies, MBA'06, director of sponsorships for MetLife; and from Nancy Gonsalves '85, an associate director for the U.S. Olympic Committee ("I am leaving for the Pan Am Games in Toronto," she emailed, "so I probably won't be able to chat until August").

Akshata Bailikeri '17, a finance major in the Carroll School, sought career counsel of another sort. "I have the opportunity to study abroad in Australia in the fall and Copenhagen in spring," she posted. "However, my Australia program starts in June 2015 and Copenhagen ends in June 2016, which might affect my ability to get an internship this or next year." She wondered how "a recruiter would view this unusual study abroad path." More than 34 alumni replied, all encouraging her to study abroad. One wrote, "[You] will be able share your experiences during the interview process—recruiters will like the diverse experiences." Another, "Australia and Denmark will give you potential exposure to the Asian markets and European; I invoke the Nike credo: 'Just do it.'" ■

# Punch list

By Andrew Skaras '15

An accounting of a (very) few of the 100-odd capital projects being worked on this summer while students are out of the way

**Burns Library's Ford Tower:** Replace worn exterior limestone blocks with 6,000 tons of new stone quarried in Spencer, Indiana, source of the original stone that has girded the tower since the 1920s. **Carney Hall, second floor:** Build 1,500-square-foot student art area, combining a staging room and the University's first student art gallery that does not live in inconveniently shaped and also borrowed space. **2101 Commonwealth Avenue:** Continue renovation of the former cardinal's residence on the Brighton Campus as a new home for the McMullen



2150 Commonwealth Avenue

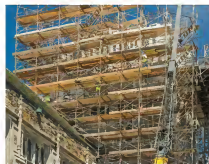
Museum (opening show scheduled for 2016), including construction of a 7,000-square-foot addition at the east end of the building. When completed the building will house a cafeteria and 6,000 square feet of exhibition space compared with the current 3,600-square-foot space in Devlin Hall. **Conte Forum:** Replace original (1988) steel and plywood dasher boards ("the boards" in skating lingo) with a thoroughly modern aluminum and glass system. The conversion of the floor from hockey rink to basketball court and vice versa will continue to take the "bull gang" three hours. **Devlin Hall, Room 313:**

Renovate laboratory using plastic rather than metal furnishings for two faculty members whose research instruments measure minute amounts of metallic element in rocks. **2150 Commonwealth Avenue:** Complete wall and window enclosure on the six-story building that will house 490 upperclassmen and a student infirmary on the former site of More Hall. **RecPlex:** Repress demolition dreams and make annual repairs, including refurbishing of restrooms and recoating tennis courts. **Fulton Hall:** Reposition blackboards and projection screens in classrooms so that—remarkably—both can be used at the same time. **Commonwealth Avenue bus shelter:** Remodel unit east of the University's main gate by shifting the shelter and sidewalk farther back from street and then deepening the bus pull-off so that a stopped bus does not obstruct the east-bound lane of Commonwealth Avenue. **Ignacio and Rubenstein halls:** Renovate lounge in Ignacio to place the building on par with its neighbor Rubenstein, whose lounge was renovated last summer. Replace electrical systems in both buildings, most particularly the transformers that have been in place since the dormitories were constructed in 1973. **Higgins Hall:** Furnish biology



2101 Commonwealth Avenue

laboratory with custom shelving to support dozens of fish tanks that will be home to thousands of zebrafish (*Danio rerio*), a tiny blue-striped creature that breeds quickly and is used in the study of gene function and cell regeneration. **McGuinn Hall basement:** Renovate the too-often flooded Social Work Library, which in addition to being an asset for the professional school is a favored destination for undergraduates seeking distraction-free studying. Install Flotex, a washable textile flooring material. **2000 Commonwealth Avenue:** Conduct exploratory work into



Ford Tower

structural elements of the 17-story apartment building in advance of renovations that will bring the University a 540-bed dormitory about half a mile east of the Lower Campus in the fall of 2016, following which Edmond's Hall will be demolished to make room for a new recreation complex, following which the RecPlex will not ever again need to be renovated and will make room, current plans say, for a student center. **Robsham Theater:** Replace original (1981) seating without inconveniencing any of the seven freshman orientation sessions that use the theater. New chairs with oak backs and "port" colored upholstery will first serve attendees of Orientation Seven (August 23–25) while they watch skits on "Life and Times at Boston College" and "The Road Less Traveled." **3 Lake Street, Brighton Campus:** Replace aged and groaning window air conditioning units in the *Boston College Magazine* conference room with sleek white wall-hung (and cellar-fed) dispensers of cool air that make no sound that editors can hear above the scratching of their blue or red pencils. ■

# Assigned viewing

**COURSE:** HIST 250701—Black Robe: Representations of the Jesuits in Film

By Robert A. Maryks

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Theologians and political theorists, astronomers and dramatists, architects of sacral buildings, engineers of city fortifications, and, above all, missionaries and schoolmasters—almost from the moment the Society of Jesus was founded in 1540, its members involved themselves in the world, sometimes igniting controversy. This course examines contrasting images of the Jesuits in contemporary film.

## FILMS AND READINGS

*The Exorcist* (1973)  
William Friedkin, director

The film opens amid ancient mysterious ruins in the desert of Iraq, where an old Jesuit archaeologist, Lankester Merrin (Max von Sydow), digs. From there, the viewer, suitably unsettled, is transported to the campus of Georgetown University, where a young Jesuit priest, Damien Karras (Jason Miller), works as a psychiatrist. Both Jesuits embody their order's commitment to dialogue between religion and science, although faith, for Karras, has been losing ground. The case of a possessed 12-year-old girl challenges each man, as Karras is called in by the girl's utterly worldly mother and Merrin is summoned by the bishop. Both men die in the demonic confrontation—Merrin from heart failure, Karras by compelling the devil into his own body and throwing himself out the window. With the Jesuit psychiatrist's last act, the director seems to suggest, dies his post-Vatican II, soaked-



in-alcohol, shrouded-in-cigarette-smoke skepticism. His is a Christ-like immolation. *Companion reading:* "Early Modern Jesuit Science: A Historiographical Essay," by Sheila J. Rabin, in the *Journal of Jesuit Studies* (2014).

*Silence* [Chinmoku] (1971)  
Masahiro Shinoda, director

This film is an adaptation of the novel by Shusaku Endo, who is called the "Japanese Graham Greene" for his Catholicism-infused writing. In English subtitles, it begins with a history lesson: The mission-

ary Francis Xavier became the first Jesuit to reach Japan, "in 1549, just as firearms were introduced." In letters to confrères, Francis enthused that the Japanese were "eager to obtain news about God and natural things." Still, three subsequent decades of conversions to Christianity (yielding "200 churches, 75 priests, and 300,000 Christians," the film notes) raised tensions among Japan's feudal lords, who might have tolerated the foreign import as a geisha—a dalliance—but not as a wife. Persecution thinned Christianity's ranks; in another 60 years its adherents practiced underground. *Silence* narrates an attempt by two Portuguese Jesuits, Rodrigues and Garrpe, to re-establish a vanished mission in the 1630s. Their discovery by authorities provokes a new wave of persecution, and they must choose: publicly renounce their faith (by stepping on an icon) or bring more torture on the local crypto-Christian community and themselves. What is the acceptable Christian response? *Companion reading:* *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier* (1992).

*The Man in the Iron Mask* (1998)  
Randall Wallace, director

"I want you to find out who the secret leader of the Jesuits is. And when you have, for God and for France, I wish you to kill him." This is how King Louis XIV (Leonardo DiCaprio) entrusts his court priest and former musketeer Aramis (Jeremy Irons) with the mission of eliminating Jesuit opposition to his politics of war. The king is unaware that the Jesuits' general is in fact Aramis. The first Jesuits studied in Paris, as Ignatius, a former knight, did in the early 1530s. By Louis's reign (1643–1715), the Society was a font of confessors-to-the-court, in France, Spain, and elsewhere in Catholic Europe, and its proximity to power provoked suspicions of intrigue. In this film, Aramis will plot a coup to replace Louis—an imposter to the French throne—with Louis's twin, Philippe (DiCaprio), who has been long imprisoned and locked in an iron mask. The film is an approximation of Alexandre Dumas's final entry (published 1847–50) in his d'Artagnan romances, which are an even looser approximation of mid-17th-century history. A man was held anony-

mously in the Bastille during Louis's rule, but his mask was of black velvet; he likely had been the valet to a court minister who knew too much. The Jesuits were often viewed in France as the enemy within—protecting the ultramontanist interests of Rome (favoring centralized, papal authority) more than Gallican ones—which would eventually lead to France's suppression of them in 1762. (Urged by Europe's leaders, Pope Clement XIV would order a wider suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 that would last 41 years.) Dumas finished the *Iron Mask* the same year the Jesuits were allowed to reopen their schools in France following their expulsion again after the 1848 revolution. His warning, “for God and for France,” against the Society, and his manipulation of the myth of Jesuits as plotters, was palatable to French readers, who were steeped in an anti-Jesuit literary tradition that included Pascal and Voltaire. Still, it is hard to pin director Wallace with that bias, when his Jesuit storyline peters out and is replaced by swashbuckling adventure. *Companion reading: Beginning To Be a Jesuit: Instructions for the Paris Novitiate circa 1685* (2011).

*The Mission* (1986)  
Roland Joffé, director

The setting is South America in 1750, as the semi-autonomous Jesuit missions in what is mostly now Paraguay are caught in the transfer of territory between Spain and Portugal. Rome has brokered the missions' demise, but Jesuits choose to stay and protect their progress with the natives. One Jesuit (Robert De Niro), a former slaver and mercenary, reclaims his sword and, like Peter at Gethsemane, meets violence with violence—a hopeless undertaking. Fr. Gabriel, played by Jeremy Irons (a Jesuit yet again), argues for prayer: “If might is right, then love has no place in the world.” History records the Jesuits' loss. Music conveys the filmmaker's ambivalence: in the spirit-tinting beauty of Fr. Gabriel's oboe; in the exuberant, nearly joyous, background in battle scenes. The film ends with a 20th-century admonishment: “Many of the priests who, inspired by faith and love, continue to support the rights of Indians for justice, do so with their lives.” The movie was nominated for



seven Academy Awards, including best picture. *Companion reading: The Guarani and Their Missions: A Socioeconomic History*, by Julia Sarreal (2014).

*Amen* (2002)  
Costa-Gavras, director

Kurt Gerstein (Ulrich Tukur) is a chemical engineer and SS officer who was instrumental in the development of Zyklon B, the gas used in the Nazi extermination camps—he is an historical figure and he died of apparent suicide in a French jail in 1945. Riccardo Fontana (Mathieu Kassovitz) is a Roman aristocratic Jesuit and secretary to the papal nuncio in Berlin—he is a fictional character. In this film, the two men try, without consequence, to breach the bastion of diplomatic moderation that is the Vatican, to secure public condemnation by Pius XII of the Nazi slaughter of Jews. It is a film of long silences (into which a holiday rendition of “Stille Nacht” falls harshly); the urgency and passage of time is measured in trains traveling to and from Eastern Europe. Costa-Gavras's choice of a Jesuit priest is undeveloped—when asked by Gerstein how he would like to be introduced to a colleague, Fontana passes up “Jesuit” and offers, “a spy for God.” Since World War II, Israel's remembrance authority has recognized 14 Jesuits as “righteous among the nations” for rescuing Jews during the Holocaust. Costa-Gavras depicts other priests and nuns who did the same, in Rome. But the order of Jesuits, like the Church more broadly, was tainted by a Catholic *longue-durée* anti-Judaism that permitted silence while the Holocaust took place in Christian Europe. *Companion reading: “The Tragic Couple”: Encounters Between Jews and Jesuits*, edited by James Bernauer and Robert A. Maryks (2013).

*The Hoodlum Priest* (1961)  
Irvin Kershner, director

“The Society has the care of those souls for whom either there is nobody to care or, if somebody ought to care, for whom the care is negligent.” That is how Jerónimo Nadal, a close collaborator of Ignatius of Loyola, defined the distinctiveness of Jesuit ministry. Nadal's characterization challenges a common image of the Jesuits as educators, solely, of affluent youth. So does Kershner's *The Hoodlum Priest*, set in St. Louis, Missouri. Its tough-talking and occasionally cocky protagonist is a Jesuit who quits his post at a school and—with the eventual blessing of his religious superior—dedicates his life to serving ex-convicts in their transition from prison to society. Shot in black and white (and, in the words of a reviewer, “unrelentingly grim, serious, and action-filled”), the film is based on the experiences of Charles Dismas Clark, SJ (1901–63). Clark's halfway facility was, in 1959, likely the first in the country—he named it Dismas House, for the same reason he chose his middle name, after the “good thief” crucified alongside Jesus. Clark provided shelter, clothing, job counseling, and moral support to more than 2,000 men before his death. The movie helped launch the careers of director Kershner (*The Empire Strikes Back*) and cinematographer Haskell Wexler (winner, later, of two Oscars). It was also, in a sense, a harbinger of a storm about to strike the Society of Jesus in the aftermath of Vatican II, when, under the leadership of the Basque Pedro Arrupe, the Society began a process of reflection on how to recuperate its original preferential option for the poor without abandoning other ministry. After all, Ignatius opened a halfway house for Roman prostitutes a few years before giving his blessing for the first Jesuit school, in Messina, Sicily. *Companion reading: “The Ministry to Outsiders: The Jesuits,”* by John W. O'Malley, SJ, in *Saints or Devils Incarnate? Studies in Jesuits History* (2013). ■

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# The voyage

Jeffrey Bloechl's philosophy class was a test of mind, heart, and body

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY ZACHARY JASON

“HUMANS ARE WEIRD.

No animal would willingly put himself through this much pain,” Isaac Holterman '17 said. He spoke through a yellow handkerchief worn bandit-style to fend off pollen and the potent aroma of burro manure. The trail he was trudging stretched behind him 387 miles to the east—he'd walked 99 of them—and, ahead, 112 miles west, nearly to the Atlantic. He was coming down heavily on his heels, babying the blisters that had bubbled up on his toes during yesterday's 19-mile, 2,600-foot climb through eucalyptus woods, with a 20-pound pack on his back.

It was 6 A.M., and the 10 undergraduate students, their professor, a graduate assistant, a Jesuit, and I were panting more than talking. The farming village we'd stayed in the night before had no breakfast café; we were ascending another 800 feet, in anticipation of chorizo and eggs. White Spanish broom and brambly sweet chestnut lined the sides of the trail, brushing our shoulders; bright purple foxglove skimmed our knees. In the valley to our left, cows and sheep grazed, too distant to be heard. Clouds veiled another valley to our right, obscuring russet hamlets we'd seen the day before. Around us, cuckoos were singing their two-note song and white-tailed wheatears chattered.



Beguiling as the late-spring landscape is in Spain's northwest corner, most of us kept our eyes down on the uneven, rocky path, our minds on the injuries accrued from the last six days of hiking. Freshman Amanda Bolanos had 17 blisters. Kyle Olander '18, a finance major from Pittsburgh, shuffled with the aid of a walking stick, his knees wrapped in medical tape after a steep descent three days earlier. The rest of us had endured some combination of heat rash, hornet stings, scratches from stray cats and nettles, and swollen ankles; we smeared our skin with a mixture of sun-block, aloe, and cortisone. Still, biology major Coco Muir '18 surprised no one when she expressed gratitude for her



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: leaders Bloechl and Corcoran, Chadwell, Albyn, Olander, Muir, Bolanos, Holterman, Banks (top step), Street (red shirt), Piperis (flip-flop), Krakowiak, and Piper, during final reflections in Santiago de Compostela, on June 3.

days, "I was hoping you'd all get a little beat up," he told the students, his class. The catalogue title of this, his new course, was "Self-Knowledge and Discernment: The Experience of Pilgrimage," and the description began, "We will explore the

blisters and bruises. "They're reminders," she said, "that this is supposed to be hard."

Forty-something, wiry, and basically ever calm, associate professor of philosophy Jeffrey Bloechl laughed. Over an anticipated trek of 13

practice and experience of walking . . . as a way into deeper reflection on self-knowledge and discernment."

**THE IDEA FOR THE CLASS GREW** out of a conversation Bloechl happened to have in fall 2012 with Boston College administrator Mike Sacco, about a family vacation. In late May, Bloechl had walked 100 miles of Spain's rugged Camino de Santiago, or the Way of Saint James, with his wife (theology department chair Catherine Cornille) and children, then ages 14, 16, and 18. Sacco is director of the Center for Student Formation, which hosts off-campus retreats and on-campus opportunities for students

to “explore the connection between their talents, dreams, and the world’s deep needs,” in the words of its mission statement. Bloechl remembers Sacco telling him, “We need to make a Camino class.” In fall 2013, the professor began drafting a syllabus for PL449.

The Camino de Santiago is a 500-mile path across northern Spain, with its terminus at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, the purported resting place of the remains of the apostle James. It crosses mountains, plains, pastures, forests, and cities, and as a pilgrimage route it dates back 1,200 years. Once a means for Catholics to earn indulgences, the Camino drew some 237,000 wayfarers from around the globe in 2014. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII ordered an excavation that cast doubt on the legitimacy of the cathedral’s relics, but many still follow the trail to strengthen their Christian faith. Others walk out of some personal need. And now there are those who do it just to lose weight. Bloechl’s class would walk nearly half the route, starting from the city of León.

The Office of Student Formation helped Bloechl to frame the course. When Sacco suggested that a spiritual and formational guide be added as co-teacher, the professor immediately agreed, proposing a close friend, Anthony Corcoran, SJ, with Boston College ties (M.Div.’95, STL’97, STD’07).

Bloechl and Corcoran studied together at Marquette University 30 years ago, and the Jesuit had accompanied Bloechl’s family on the Camino. Corcoran’s day job is Jesuit regional superior of Russia, Ukraine, Siberia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, responsible for 40 priests of the order (the presence of which has roots going back to the early 17th century); the Society of Jesus granted him leave to join the class. Bloechl also asked Center for Student Formation graduate assistant Megan Krakowiak ’12, MA’15, to serve as the teaching aide. An avid hiker, she would be the ad hoc nurse of the trip with her first-aid kit and blister ointments.

Seventy students applied to take the course. Bloechl interviewed them all, to build a diverse group of 10 who “weren’t just looking to be tourists.” Together, they resemble one of those special teams created to take down the Nazi fortress in a World War II movie: Kate Albyn ’17, an English and secondary education major from Centennial, Colorado; Cordelia (Coco) Muir ’18, a biology major from North Carolina; Kyle Olander ’18, the finance major from

**BELOW:** The class sets out from León, on May 22. **OPPOSITE:** Banks and Holterman journal in the morning before walking, at an *albergue* in Palas de Rei.



Pittsburgh; perspectives major Greydon Piper '17, from Fort Lauderdale; Niko Piperis '17, from Omaha, studying history and philosophy; Chicagoans Arnesia (Nesi) Banks '16 (political science) and Isaac Holtermann '17 (applied psychology); and Californians Ethan Street '18 (economics and history), Amanda Bolanos '18 (perspectives and political science), and Madie Chadwell '17 (information systems and business analytics). Most had not heard of the Camino before reading about the course. Some had not traveled abroad, and others had never hiked. The reasons they gave for signing on were varied: to "discipline my mind and body"; to "let God back into my life"; to "connect with nature"; to learn "to trust." One student had lost a parent; another was estranged from family.

The class held its first meeting on March 26, in a conference room in Rahner House, on College Road. Bloechl told the group, "More so than most activities, walking connects us with a sense of self." He cited Heidegger's contention that humans walk to cope with an innate restlessness. And he said, "A pilgrim may also begin with a feeling of alienation, a sense that there's no big picture, [a desire] to walk out to find something else." The Transcendentalist Thoreau maintained walking helps humans rediscover their natural state, the "creatureliness" they lose in society. Philosophers from Socrates to Kant walked for inspiration, the steady motion propelling a deepening stream of thought. Over the two hours, Bloechl kept returning to one point: "You need to get in shape. You have to start walking, a lot, now."

In five more sessions, the students discussed readings assigned in philosophical texts (Nietzsche, Rousseau, Frédéric Gros's *A Philosophy of Walking*) and literary works (by Swiss novelist Robert Walser, Portugal's Fernando Pessoa, and Canada's Anne Carson). They wrote essays and participated in weekly 60-minute walking exercises that they documented in journals. Week Two: "Walk at a moment when you feel an urge to 'get away' for a while." Week Three: "Walk alone, with a particular wish to withdraw into yourself and be quiet." Week Six: "Concentrate on what you hope to gain from the pilgrimage on a personal level and what you hope to be able to offer others in the group. Try to gather your thoughts into the form of just a few questions or wishes (or prayers)." Bloechl said the exercises were not only for

**Muir expressed gratitude for her blisters and bruises. "They're reminders," she said, "that this is supposed to be hard." Bloechl laughed. Over an anticipated trek of 13 days, "I was hoping you'd all get a little beat up," he told the students.**



physical preparation, but to wean the students from modern life's prevailing distractions and help them "get acclimated to their own thoughts, which aren't always pleasant." He waited until the second class to mention that when they arrived in Spain he would take their cellphone chargers.

In April, the group hiked together, eight miles up and down New Hampshire's Mount Monadnock. At dusk, Bloechl asked the students to look out on a pond, as Thoreau does in *Walden*, and "see yourself as a reflection of Nature. Think of the ripples in your life disrupting that reflection." On the Camino, he said, they would try to still those waters, as they walked the 215 miles from León to the cathedral in Santiago.

"WILL THE JESUIT TRY TO CONVERT US?" We had flown into Bilbao the night before, on May 20, and were on a bus heading southwest to meet Fr. Corcoran in León. Only three of the students were practicing Catholics, and many in the group seemed a little uncertain about a cleric serving as co-leader, let alone living with them for two weeks.

When Fr. Tony, a native Texan, met up with us in the stone-paved Plaza Regla of León's old town, these concerns vanished. Tall, gangly, bespectacled, and sunburned—on the trail, he would spray himself frequently with SPF 90—Corcoran hugged Bloechl, who informed the class that the Jesuit had started walking 12 days earlier in Pamplona.

"But you've all survived two days with Professor Bloechl!" Three decades on, Bloechl and Fr. Tony's friendship has not lost the giddiness of best friends at the start of a summer vacation. One night, while the rest of us tried to sleep, they spent 10 minutes chortling as they spun a story about our lazy-eyed, argyle-sweatered innkeeper's other life as a wizard. Each morning on the Camino, the two sang along to a song on Bloechl's iPhone to awaken the class; one morning it was the "Oompa Loompa Song" from *Charlie and the*

*Chocolate Factory*, another the Fendermen's "Mule Skinner Blues," which Bloechl accentuated with an air banjo solo.

"You brought something out in him," Chadwell said much later to Fr. Tony. "He was so reserved and cerebral in class."

"I know," the priest said. Then, mock panic, "How do we get him back in the box?"

As we plodded toward Santiago de Compostela in pairs and small groups, miles spent one-on-one with the attentive, patient, and open Fr. Tony would be coveted by all. He said six Masses on our journey, intimate celebrations for the class and the occasional passerby. His homilies were swift and personal, scattered with one-liners and anecdotes from his first Camino. Unless they'd fallen asleep, the students attended every Mass. Some joined partly out of a habit of religious observance, but all for a contemplative end to the day.

In León, on the eve of our departure, Fr. Tony celebrated Mass in a small bedroom of our *albergue* (inn), a term that along the Camino designated a hostel for pilgrims. As the students sat on bunk beds, he removed from his rucksack a golden chalice, a 3 x 5 inch representation of the face of Jesus, and a Tupperware container filled with host, and he set them on a plastic end table, the evening's altar. His cargo pants swished each time he genuflected.

That night there was much unpacking and repacking, and few slept well. When we first entered the *albergue*, Bloechl and I had caught a middle-aged woman who collapsed on the staircase. "Will that be us in a few days?" Olander asked.

**DAY 1.** At 7:30 the next morning, we gathered outside the towering 13th-century Cathedral of León, its rose window glowing from the sunlight within. A pharmacy's green neon sign told us it was two degrees Celsius (36° F), and our breaths made small clouds. Bloechl and Fr. Tony began what would be the pre-walk routine: one reciting a quote and the other offering a prayer to set the day's tone. On this morn-

ing, Bloechl quoted from Pedro Arrupe (1907–91), a past Jesuit superior general and a Bilbao native:

Nothing is more practical in life than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

Fr. Tony, who hasn't lost his penchant for starting sentences with "y'all" and ending with "huh," even after serving in Russia since 1997, followed. "As you walk," he said, "I just ask that y'all breathe in that greatness, that natural beauty that will surround you, huh."

Seconds after the cathedral clock struck eight, we set off, observing 45 minutes of silence, as we would every morning. Bloechl recommended we devote this time to practicing St. Ignatius's five-step examen—(1) pray for clarity of mind and spirit, then (2, 3) review moments of gratitude and the range of emotions of the previous day, (4) try to find the root of one emotion, and (5) pray for the day ahead. Most struggled to focus on the first day, especially as we wove through the rush-hour throngs chattering on their cell-phones, passed pungent fish markets, and trekked along a high-traffic strip of car dealerships and factories.

We followed the Camino's waymarks out of the city, golden scallop shells that dot the trail every half-kilometer. There are competing legends—some say early pilgrims picked shells on the Atlantic shore as reminders of their journey; others that when St. James saved a drowning knight off Galicia, the knight emerged covered in them.

An hour into the walk, Bloechl, Fr. Tony, and four others stopped for *café con leche*, and the rest continued. Half a mile ahead, the waymarks pointed two ways—straight,





along a highway, and left, onto a trail through the plain. The group of eight that had walked ahead were nowhere in sight. Bloechl called Krakowiak's phone to ask which way they went. No answer. He checked his guidebook—the paths didn't converge again for 22 miles, at a point we weren't due to reach until the next afternoon. We guessed and went left.

We walked along a flat dirt and gravel path, six pairs of feet making what Fr. Tony calls "the Camino crunch," through five miles of tall grass, broom, and purple heather. Lizards occasionally scooted past our feet, and storks sailed overhead. Most of us stayed silent for a while. "I have separation anxiety," Banks confessed. "Are we always going to get split up like this?"

An hour later, Krakowiak called back. She'd found a two-mile road off the highway that linked with us. We met at lunch, at the one café in Antimio de Arriba (population 53).

Following the lead of most of the 20 or so other pilgrims in the restaurant, we took off our boots and socks and limped barefoot to the order bar. The menu offered *bocadillos*, toasted subs filled with Spanish omelet or Iberian ham; and salads topped with canned tuna. No one tried the local pig snout. In three days (10 meals), some students would eat seven *bocadillos*. Piperis, blue-eyed and bearded (he was one

Muir, at the top of O Cebreiro, roughly the walk's midpoint.

of three students who elected not to shave on the trip), said he worried he'd lose his mind if he couldn't find a *bocadillo* back in the States. Street, ever deadpan, said that when he listened to his footsteps on the trail, he heard himself chewing a *bocadillo*.

At red plastic tables in the shade, Krakowiak set out toilet paper rolls in lieu of never-present napkins. Bolanos, Olander, and Chadwell applied moleskin bandages to the soles of their feet. A few students ate fried eggs (perhaps courtesy of the chickens we heard clucking) with yolks as orange as the freshly squeezed *jugo de naranja*. Piperis tossed scraps of bread to a stray mutt, Holterman to a goat.

Lunch loosened the conversation on the afternoon's walk. Students broke off into twos and threes, and amid the banter—Piperis in his booming voice waxing poetic about Nebraska football; Street sharing his love of Stanley Kubrick in his California drawl; Albyn, Banks, and Holterman singing Taylor Swift songs—they began to open up to each other, about the pressures they felt to study the subjects their parents want them to study, romantic relationships that had ended poorly, and the serenity they were searching for on this long walk.



Bloechl, Fr. Tony, and Krakowiak spread themselves through the class, available for questions and ensuring that conversations returned by and by to questions of spirituality, formation, or philosophy.

Fr. Tony had encouraged the class to find metaphors in the Camino. We were preoccupied managing our shoulder pain, constantly adjusting back and hip straps, regretting packing more than 20 pounds of inflatable pillows, fleece blankets, sleeping bags, leather-bound walking journals, leisure reading (Kerouac, Paulo Coelho, Jesuit Walter Ciszek), cameras, and sweaters. We began to see our rucksacks as our material lives: The person with the most belongings has the most weighing him or her down. Excess socks and magazines disappeared.

Just before 4:00, we arrived at the village of Mazarife (population 451) and a one-story adobe *albergue* with a terracotta roof (6€—less than \$7—for a bed, a homemade dinner, and breakfast). Holterman, the one fluent Spanish speaker in the class, struck up a conversation with the owner, a gruff, middle-aged physiotherapist named Pepe Giner. He told Holterman that when he was diagnosed with liver cancer a decade earlier, he promised God that if he survived he would open a hostel for pilgrims. Giner, his

brother, and his daughter prepared raspberry salad, squash soup, and vegetable paella for the class and 50 other pilgrims in the basement dining room.

Fr. Tony celebrated Mass after the tables were cleared. Kate Albyn, a soprano, led the hymns, and the rest of the class softly sang along. Holterman read the Gospel in Spanish for the Giners, and a German couple watched in silence.

Afterward, sunburned and yawning, the class sat in a circle on the front lawn for “reflections,” an hour every other night for sharing impressions and thoughts. Bolanos summed up: As much as the day’s conversations had brought out the group’s differences, she said, “We’re all here searching for something greater for ourselves.”

The students were in bed by 9:30—“about an hour before I usually start homework,” Piper pointed out.

**WE LEFT THE NEXT MORNING** at 7:00 and continued along the flatlands, past fields of wheat scattered with conifers and through a small poplar forest. We crossed a 15th-century footbridge with 19 arches over the river Orbigo,

and saw villages with doors painted blue to repel insects. On either side of the trail were Roman aqueducts, now filled in with vegetation. The farmers we occasionally passed called out *Buen Camino*, the universal greeting and farewell to pilgrims.

Each class member heard and said *Buen Camino* at least two dozen times a day. This was the onset of the busy season, and we passed or were passed by about 20 pilgrims and locals an hour. Locals tended to offer generosity or wisdom. Along one stretch of fields, a pony-tailed man staffed a kiosk offering free fresh watermelon, strawberries, orange juice, and chestnuts to walkers. When Holterman, in brown high-top boots that dwarfed his thin legs, asked an elderly man in Chozas de Arriba for directions, the villager added, *Qué vais bien y qué volvais mejor* (Journey well and return better). It became Holterman's walking mantra, something he repeated any time he needed inspiration.

Among pilgrims, the lone travelers tended to strike up the most conversations, and were the most likely to reveal why they were walking: the woman from Kentucky who told Banks she was trying to get over a divorce; the French couple grieving the death of their son; the Vancouverite relishing, so he said, three weeks on the trail without his wife. Most encounters never extended beyond *Buen Camino*. But a few lasted hours. Every other day Piperis would happen upon a middle-aged hiker named Constantine, and they would speak in Greek. Almost every day an elderly, bearded Australian man would catch up to Chadwell to talk. Quiet, yet perfectly willing to bypass small-talk ("I'm not really interested in if you liked your *ensalada mixta*"), Chadwell said in reflections one night, "In the real world, when you ask people how they are, they'll just say good, or busy," and maybe they'll rattle off items from their day planner. "Here, where we all have only one goal, to walk forward, and no distractions to escape into, when you ask someone how they are, they'll tell you how their heart is."

**Bolanos summed up: As much as the day's conversations had brought out the group's differences, "we're all here searching for something greater for ourselves." The students were in bed by 9:30—"about an hour before I usually start homework," Piperis pointed out.**

By day three, when the plains gave way to the Montes de León, everyone had settled into a distinctive stride. Piper had managed to pack his life into 11 pounds, and bounced along at the front in shorts and a blue nylon pullover, a look of wonder on his face as his head bobbed to gaze at the landscape left and right. Each morning Banks plucked a different flower from the side of the trail and set it in her hair. When her left knee gave, Fr. Tony handed her one of

his metallic orange walking sticks, which she often twirled in the air, a trick she'd learned on her high school color guard team. Street often walked alone. He wore corduroy pants and an olive green fedora, and kept a straw dangling from his mouth; a young organic farmer from Massachusetts whom we encounter each day nicknamed him Crocodile Dundee. He was the wanderer, strolling into villages, sampling the local cherry liqueur and spicy *pimientos*.

On the evening of day three we settled into Rabanal, a village of 60 with one-story stone huts that were once the shelters of 18th-century herdsmen. We held reflections in a sunken garden before Roman ruins. "The simplicity of life on the Camino, the simple *bocadillos*, simple sleeping, simple walking, the simple sounds of the rivers we pass, is working its way through me," said Olander (he of the aching knees). "My mind is quieting down." Fr. Tony celebrated Pentecost Sunday Mass in the garden, and we walked next door to a 12th-century Romanesque church with spider-web cracks in the ceiling, to hear Gregorian chants.

Two hours into day four, up a hill of lavender, we reached a clearing at the peak of the Camino, 4,963 feet above sea level, and stopped at the Cruz de Ferro, an iron cross 1,000 years old. Centuries before the Camino, Romans offered sacrifices to the god Mercury on this site. Now, the simple small disciple's cross stands atop a 30-foot wooden pole atop a 10-foot pile of stones. By tradition, pilgrims carry a rock from their home country (though most today pick up a pebble nearby along the trail), a representation of a sin or an unresolved issue or grief. After traveling weeks with its weight, they leave it on the pile. Piperis brought a circular sliver of a branch he received from his roommate's late



father, a surgeon who had turned to woodworking after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Some walkers leave seashells, painted rocks, or photographs.

Chadwell sat for a few minutes on the grass beside the mound. Though raised Evangelical Christian, she hadn't attended church in a long time. But she said that as she watched her classmates grow quiet before depositing their rocks, and as a dozen other walkers held hands and sang a hymn, "For the first time in my life, I felt God's presence." She walked alone in silence until reaching the *albergue*.

Professor Bloechl was among the last to arrive at the cross, and he recounted his story the next night. He was carrying a stone to commemorate his friend assistant professor of philosophy Jonathan Trejo-Mathys. The two were co-teaching a graduate seminar in the fall of 2014 when Trejo-Mathys was battling cancer. He died that November at age 35, leaving a wife and two young daughters. Earlier, Bloechl had walked through a field of small white flowers that resembled lilies of the valley, his wife's favorite flower. The foliage was so thick that "it was as if Catherine was embracing me," he said. Missing his wife, his colleague, and others in his life who died young—and admittedly feeling overtired—he became teary. Then, he heard the sound of cloth ripping and someone yell, "Oh my God!" He turned around to find that Fr. Tony's pants had torn as he lept over a narrow stream.

"Levity always comes on the Camino at the exact right moment," Bloechl said.

**DAY 7.** After 20 miles at a decent pace through vineyards and cherry orchards on day 5 and 19 miles that started along the gentle Rio Valcarlos and ended in the O Courel mountains on day 6, we arrived at the peak of O Cebreiro following an hour's climb, just after 7:00 A.M. The crests of hills that rolled to the horizon jutted above the clouds below us like tiny islands. Fr. Tony offered to celebrate

Mass, and we gathered on a lawn scattered with poplar trees, stacking our rucksacks into a pyramid to form an altar. We were joined by two 60-something Australians, Lawrence and José, two middle-aged Dutch women, and a Frenchman who the night before had told Fr. Tony he didn't attend Mass because, "Je suis Catholique, mais je suis Français." When Fr. Tony asked the congregants standing in a circle, "What should we pray for?" Lawrence said, "That we are able to carry the lessons of the Camino with us when we return. That we don't lose the Way just because we aren't walking on it." The Gospel was from Mark 10:46–52, the story of Jesus healing the blind man. In his homily, as the sun brightened behind him, Fr. Tony said "We thank God for our vision, appreciating his greatness here at the summit.... But blindness is also a gift. Blindness propels scientific discoveries. Blindness spurs new insights into the faith. And our blindness will drive us down into our souls on the Camino." Our journeys into the soul continued after breakfast.

Before setting off on the day's 14-mile, 2,600-foot descent through woodland toward Triacastela (named for three castles, all of them gone), Bloechl asked the class to consider a quote from the 12th-century French monk Bernard of Clairvaux: "You will find something more in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you what you can never learn from masters." For the next few hours I walked with Piperis and Holterman, the two biggest personalities in the class. The talk was mostly serious—about maintaining roots while we search for the truths in other religions and cultures. We stopped by a knobby sweet chestnut tree, the diameter of a corn silo. A sign noted the tree's age: 800 years. "Almost as old as me," the Frenchman from Mass said as he passed us. Our conversation turned to Nature. Seven days into the Camino, Nature had become our one constant. We ate each meal in a new café and the *albergues* changed each night—some had 100 beds to a room, others four; some turned out the lights at 10:00, and some didn't allow boots in the bedroom. The challenge we came around to was not about maintaining or abandoning traditions. It was about finding a way toward the grace and serenity of Nature.

After we arrived in Triacastela and held reflections seated at café tables under broad umbrellas—the sun didn't set until 10 at night—Holterman continued the conversation. "We make culture and yet we're enslaved by it," he said to his classmates. "But being in Nature has made me think about what I *can* change about myself." As was typical during reflections, the conversation quickly evolved.

"Society is about instant gratification," said Street. "Nature is patient." The tree isn't downloading an app for rain. It exists and waits until it rains. "And we're getting so close to Nature it's making me more patient. The earth





is beating us up over and over again. This is spiritual boot camp." Muir, Piper, and Olander agreed that they felt their patience expanding on the Camino.

Krakowiak said, "Home is where I allow myself to be known. That's what we're all doing out here."

"When I look back or journal about the day, I don't think of the sites we've seen or the places we stop at, I think of the conversations," said Piper. "Sometimes I get so deep in them that I don't notice the landscape has completely changed like three times since we started talking."

"I grew up in Nature, in Wisconsin farmland," said Bloechl. "But now when I think of beauty, the first thoughts that come to mind are of people."

At each café, church, and *albergue*, we stopped to add a stamp to our Camino passports, the *Credenciales del Peregrino* (pilgrim's credentials). We would present these at an office of the archdiocese in Santiago to receive our *compostelas*, official-looking certificates bearing our Latinized

**ABOVE:** Around table in foreground, from left, Muir, Holterman, and Street after hiking 19 miles and climbing 2,600 feet. **OPPOSITE:** Corcoran (left) and Bloechl, at lunch in San Marcos, two hours before reaching Santiago de Compostela.

names. About half of the *albergue* owners have theirs hanging from the lobby walls. The owners who had them tended to be more accommodating—offering foot massage machines, laundry services, later quiet hours, showers of more than 15 seconds, and complimentary breakfasts. The one-story, narrow-hallwayed stone *albergue* in Triacastela had no *compostela*. The bathrooms and bedrooms were closed off by blue saloon doors that rattled in the wind at night; it dipped to 30 degrees, but the bedroom windows wouldn't shut; five minutes before and again five minutes after 10:00 P.M., the owner stormed into our room and shouted, *Callate!* (Be Quiet.) The next morning, the group left the *albergue* in record time.

Less than a mile down the trail, we came to a fork. We split again, this time by choice. Half of the group decided to go right, a route three hours shorter that gave them time to nurse their wounds and prepare a bolognaise for the group's dinner. The rest of us hiked along the twisting river Sarria through deep woods to visit the sixth-century monastery of Samos. The massive granite fortress has the capacity to house 500, but only 11 Benedictine monks live there today. In the mahogany-walled sacristy, in a glass tube within a velvet-lined display case beneath a golden crucifix, rests the left



femur of St. Benedict (c. 480–543), we were told. The tour guide said there were 88 similar relics of saints enshrined along the Camino.

This provoked a conversation that lasted miles, about how the class's intentions compared with those of early pilgrims. As Gideon Lewis-Kraus writes in his 2012 pilgrimage memoir, *A Sense of Direction*, "Contemporary pilgrimage isn't the old push to escape the stultification of boredom with the novelty of travel, but the new desire to escape the anxiety of novelty with the guarantees of obligation." Albyn and Piperis both prefaced their observations by saying that they feared a career of repetitive work; but, even so, each said, the repetitive, basic task of walking 10 hours every day had helped them see "the beauty of monotony." "The monotony of the Camino is making room for my mind to transform my thoughts," said Albyn, her bright blue eyes focused on the trail ahead. Holterman noted, "This is the longest time I've been with my own thoughts in my life. At home I'm lucky if five minutes pass before I check my phone. Here I can actually feel my train of thought progressing." They and other students agreed that while long stretches of the Camino weren't particularly serene—at least a few miles most days were along highways—they'd become much more atten-

**ABOVE:** Bloechl, behind Piper and Banks, crossing a Roman bridge in Ponferrada.

**OPPOSITE:** A Spanish masseur treat's Krakowiak's swollen ankles, as Holterman translates and Bloechl looks on.

tive to the landscape and to their companions: to Bolanos smiling all day amid obvious pain, Albyn's inability to become visibly annoyed with anyone ("to know if she's mad you have to listen to her different shades of happy," said Olander), Piperis's ability to throw off his rucksack, flop onto the bed, and fall asleep, seemingly in one motion. As Gros notes in *A Philosophy of Walking*, "It is when we renounce everything that everything is given to us, in abundance."

The weather cloned itself for nine days in a row. Each morning the students kept their hands in their pockets until the sun rose behind them to whip them without mercy for the rest of the day. First the windbreakers came off, then the zip-off pant-legs. By lunch, we were dripping. Rarely did a cloud offer refuge. The Camino began to feel like one eternal day.

We knew time was progressing by our intensifying suffering. We were sleep-deprived from nights sharing a room with 50 strangers. Even when we had our own room—half of the *albergues* happened to have a room with exactly

14 beds—our neighbors seemed to snore directly into the air vents. Our feet were wrinkled and nearing the consistency of Play-Doh. Bolanos's blisters now numbered 19; she experienced pain with every step.

Tired, sore, thirsty, we were all losing the capacity to check ourselves from snapping, from saying, "Shut up and let me ache in silence." Yet as their pain grew, so did the students' patience and kindness. Olander said he treated the first few days' walk as a race. But when his knees throbbed toward O Cebrero, "I eventually listened to my pain and slowed down." This allowed him to have a two-hour conversation with Banks that got "so deep I forgot about my knees. It's like what Doc [the class's nickname for Bloechl] said, 'Health of mind is inseparable from health of body.'"

During reflections, Albyn said that compassion was "experiencing the fullness of life with one another, suffering with one another. That's what we're doing on the Camino."

The students grew much more comfortable with silence, and on day 11 no one said a word for two hours.

Day 12. We walked along a gradual 900-foot descent through pine forests, chicken farms, and small villages. At lunch we stopped at a *pulperia* (octopus café) for poached octopus—the cuisine grew more nautical as we approached the Atlantic. At 6:00 P.M., we gathered for a final Mass, in our peach-colored *alberque* bedroom with exactly 14 beds. Fr. Tony set up an altar by the window; outside, pilgrims were hanging their laundry. Six of our group sat before him on the hardwood floor, the rest gazed down from the top bunks. In his homily, he shared that he had walked the Camino in 2012 to remember his brother Joseph Corcoran, a 1984 Boston College graduate. Joseph renounced his Catholic roots when he was 18. Nonetheless, he'd lived in Spain and had often asked Fr. Tony to walk the Camino with him. He contracted AIDS before he was 30. As he got worse, Fr. Tony moved in with him in a one-room apartment in New York, waking up every couple of hours to care for him (Fr. Tony hasn't been able to sleep for more than three hours straight since). On his deathbed,

**We sat in a row on the plaza's hot cobblestones, leaning on our rucksacks. Bloechl took off his boots and tossed them in front of him. As the rest of us followed suit, a flock of photographers encircled the pile. A couple from Ohio offered us a bottle of champagne.**

Joseph asked his brother, for the first time, to pray for him. When Fr. Tony and the Bloechs arrived in Santiago a few days after the 20th anniversary of his death, Fr. Tony registered his *compostela* in Joseph's name.

On day 13, with the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela beckoning at the end of some 14 miles, Bloechl and Fr. Tony sang the "Oompa Loompa Song" one last time, and the group set off. Most struggled to focus on the silent examen. We wove through another pine forest, passed cemeteries with above-ground vaults stacked eight high, and sat for a few minutes in a small chapel at Monte de Gozo (Hill of Joy), on which Pope John Paul II celebrated the final Mass of World Youth Day in 1989. Three-hundred-sixty feet above the city, the hill offered our first view of Santiago. Each day the group had walked at different paces—Krakowiak and Piper usually checking into the *alberque* first, around 3:00, and the last arriving an hour or so later. We walked the six miles downhill into Santiago together, through the winding pedestrian roads of the old town, down a stone staircase where a woman played a triumphal *muñeira* tune on Galician bagpipes, and onto the plaza before the cathedral. And we stopped.

Bloechl approached Bolanos, whose blisters now totaled 24. "You did it," he said. She finally cried. Piper and Holterman were crying. We sat in a row on the plaza's hot cobblestones, leaning on our rucksacks. Bloechl took off his boots and tossed them in front of him. As the rest of us followed suit, a flock of photographers encircled the pile. A couple from Ohio celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary offered us their extra bottle of champagne. There was joy, relief, and sadness. After 13 days of it, waking up to a 1960s children's song and walking all day together felt like the only and best thing to do. What now?

**WHEN WE ARRIVED** at *Alberque Ultimo Sello* (literally, The Last Stamp Hostel) a few blocks past the Cathedral, the





Minutes after the group's arrival on the plaza of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

receptionist handed over the envelope with the students' cellphone chargers, mailed from Bilbao. Some sat in the lobby checking their email or posting photos of the trip to Instagram, the rest went out and shopped for new shirts and shoes.

Before our last dinner together—a feast of tapas (*pulpo*, *jamon iberico*, and *patatas bravas*) at an outdoor café—we held final reflections on a stone staircase to the side of the cathedral. We had showered but were sweating again on the steps; it was the hottest and sunniest day of the trip. Bloechl asked the students to consider one good thing, one change they felt, and one question they still had at the end of the Camino.

"Looking out onto the clouds on all sides from O Cebreiro, I felt my smallness in the world," said Albyn. Heat rash colored her legs, and she leaned against the mossy banister in a blue T-shirt bearing the Colorado flag. "But we had all worked extremely hard to get to that site, and we were one small thing together."

"I felt seen up there at O Cebreiro," said Piper, the tips of his brown crew-cut seared blonde. He said that back in September he somehow chose not to delete the email from the Office of Student Formation that read, "17 days in Spain, 3 Credits, 1 Long Walk." He applied on a whim, thinking it might be an opportunity to "not just study a philosophy, but live it." "When I got to that peak, I felt like I was meant to be there. I had no idea spirituality could be this important to me."

Muir said she felt more present. Fatigue accentuated her slight North Carolina drawl, and she spoke more slowly than usual.

"I'm obsessed with countdowns—two miles to go until the 10-mile mark, nine questions left on this test, three days

until the weekend. Out here I've realized how much I don't notice when I think like that, and when I don't think like that, how much more available I am to friends."

Multiple students said that while they felt like they awakened their most natural, best selves on the Camino, they worried that this part of them would recede when they returned to their routines and social distractions, studying for finals, preparing for careers. "When we get home, how do we stay on the way?" Olander asked.

"You have an awareness that some questions are more important than others," Bloechl said. "If not that, then you

at least realize you have questions. You also have each other to discuss those questions."

Two weeks after returning, when I emailed the class to ask how they felt, Albyn wrote: "Entering the course, I believed that I would inevitably and effortlessly grow in self-knowledge and in the ability to discern my vocation through the Camino experience. I found that I cannot find answers simply by walking for two weeks. Growth in self-knowledge and discernment was and is a never-ending progress. The Camino is no longer finite, but rather a metaphor for life."

I'd asked Piper the same question back on day 10, when he was bounding ahead of the class along a Roman wall that separated the trail from a cow pasture, sunglasses covering his eyes, red bandana wrapped tight atop his head, red long-sleeved T-shirt stained with sweat and egg yolk from a breakfast several mornings earlier. He said that he felt like he was beginning to get inside the head of his father, who walked for an hour each morning, and was starting to understand what Fr. Tony had said to him: "Sanctify the ground you walk on." He was learning, too, that when the journey felt dull or arduous striving to be open and compassionate transformed it. "But really, all these steps on the Camino [354,233 according to Bolanos's pedometer] feel like the first step."

Toward what? I asked.

"Dude, I have no idea."

No one in the class claimed to have found their calling on this walk. Their paths will probably splinter in 10 directions. But—as Piper seemed to be saying—together on the Camino they made one firm footprint in the earth.

"I have no idea, dude," Piper said again after 30 seconds of silence. "But this feels solid." ■



A slideshow of the Camino walk may be viewed via Full Story, at [bcu.edu/bcm](http://bcu.edu/bcm).

# THE NEW MATH

## A group portrait

PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY WAYNE GILBERT

**O**N JUNE 9, IN AN OFFICE WITH BOXES and papers and books strewn about the floor, Professor Sol Friedberg talked about the Arts & Science's youngest Ph.D. program and related high-growth undergraduate major. The department he chairs, mathematics, was moving the next day from cramped quarters in Carney Hall to the fifth floor of Maloney, yet he could still put his hands on the self-study report from 2007 in which he and others of the faculty had promised to deliver Boston College mathematics "to national and international prominence." Success has come with surprising speed, and for three considerable reasons: a decision to focus the new Ph.D. program (launched in 2010) on an arc of important theoretical areas of mathematics, namely number theory/representation theory, algebraic geometry, and geometry/topology; the offer (also in 2010) of a new BS degree alongside the existing BA, because the academic strength of recent undergraduates merited it; and the ability to recruit extraordinary new faculty drawn to such challenges, who enjoy teaching, appreciate a friendly, supportive department, and, like Friedberg, believe Boston "has a claim to being the top city in the world" for mathematics.

Some markers of progress so far: As of last fall, the number of undergraduate math majors was 304 (roughly 60/40

BA/BS), compared with 183 in fall 2007. That's a two-thirds increase. The Ph.D. program, purposely kept small and attentive, is able to be highly selective. This year it will welcome seven students in total—three from Columbia University and one apiece from Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Wesleyan, and Peking University, China's top research school. The program's first graduate, David Hansen, Ph.D.'13, was named a Ritt Assistant Professor at Columbia in 2014.

As for the faculty, in the last three years its members have been honored with an unprecedented number of prestigious awards: four Sloan Research Fellowships (given to only 10 early-career theoretical mathematicians per year, "in recognition of distinguished performance and a unique potential to make substantial contributions to their field"); three National Science Foundation CAREER awards (the NSF's most touted honor for junior faculty); and three Simons Fellowships, for "advancing research in basic science and mathematics." Two faculty members were named Fellows of the American Mathematical Society, and another was the first recipient of the AWM-Birman Prize, established to "highlight exceptional research in topology/geometry by a woman early in her career."

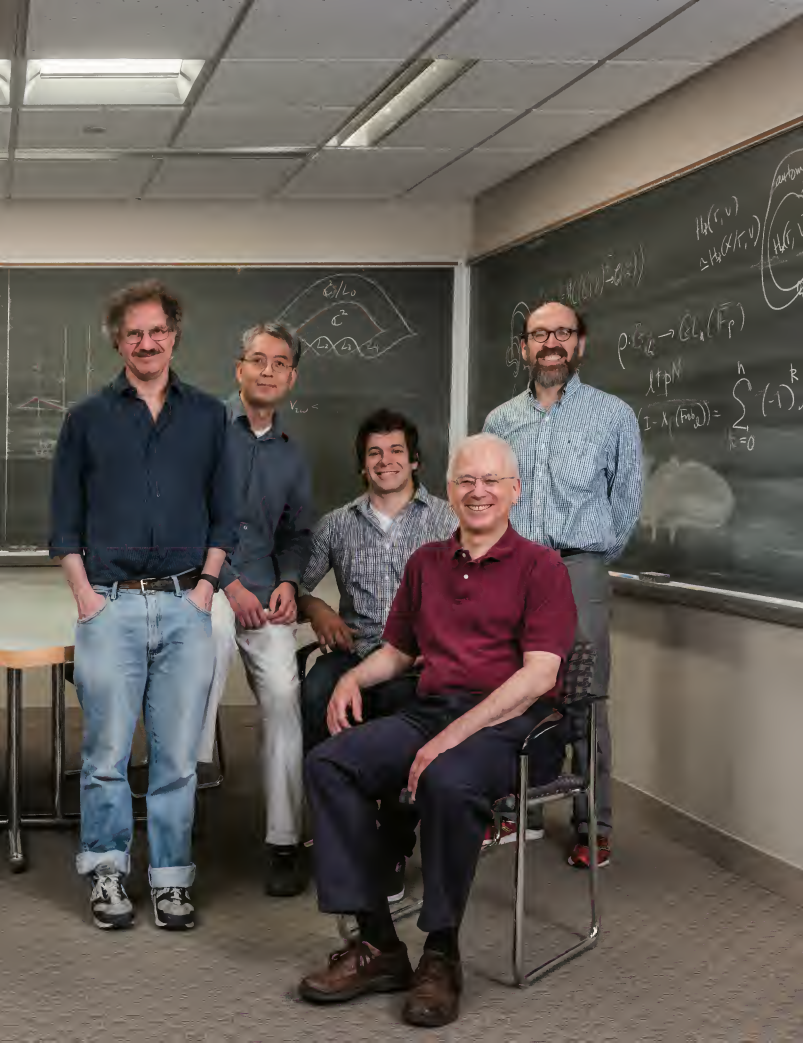
BCM assembled nine of the 12 faculty so honored on May 14 for a group photo. Please turn the page.

**Mathematicians  
receiving major  
awards since 2012**



FROM LEFT: assistant professor **Maksym Fedorchuk**, Sloan Fellow 2014; assistant professor **David Treumann**, Sloan Fellow 2013; assistant professor **Dawei Chen**, National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award 2013; associate professor **Elisenda Grigsby**, AWM-Birman Prize 2015 (and NSF CAREER Award 2011); professor **Solomon Friedberg**, American Mathematical Society (AMS) Fellow 2014 (and Sloan Fellow 1989); professor **Tao Li**, Simons Fellow 2015; assistant professor **John Baldwin**, NSF CAREER Award 2015; professor **Avner Ash**, AMS Fellow 2013 (and Sloan Fellow 1979); professor **G. Robert Meyerhoff**, Simons Fellow 2012.

NOT SHOWN: professor **Joshua Greene**, NSF CAREER Award 2015 and Sloan Fellow 2013; professor **Martin Bridgeman**, Simons Fellow 2013; and assistant professor **David Geraghty**, Sloan Fellow 2015.



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# WEARING THE BADGE

New York City entered the 20th century with a police force of 7,500 men, none of whom were African-American. Someone had to be the first

BY ARTHUR BROWNE

**Y**OUNG SAM BATTLE HAD ALWAYS DREAMED of New York. He would imagine mighty buildings while he scrubbed the pine-board floors of his family's home. He would look at the Atlantic & North Carolina Railroad that came through his town, New Bern, North Carolina, and see visions of faraway trains that carried crowds of people on overhead tracks.

Two shining figures had brought on his yearning—William and Killis Delamar, visiting from cosmopolitan Brooklyn. Battle knew them as his mother's brothers, although they were likely her cousins. In the 1890s, relatively few Southern blacks had joined America's Great Migration, and a still smaller number had made it as good as the Delamars had. They operated horse-drawn trucking businesses, and Battle remembered them as proud, good-looking men who owned "several enormous vans and a number of big beautiful horses" and served "the best families in Brooklyn."

Over his mother's heaping meals, the Delamars told of wonders—the Brooklyn Bridge, skyscrapers with elevators, and streets with electric lights. To Battle, New York became "the center of all the glory, all the wealth, and all the freedom of the world," as poet Paul Laurence Dunbar would describe the magnetism of the city.

The attraction was all the stronger because a tide of oppression was sweeping the South as the 20th century drew near. The U.S. Supreme Court opened the floodgates in 1896 by upholding, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the constitutionality of providing separate and purportedly equal accommodations to blacks. In North Carolina, severe economic

dislocations intensified the ruling's corrosive impacts. As plunging cotton prices drove white farmers toward poverty, Battle's hometown newspaper, the *New Bern Journal*, called in 1898 for renouncing "negro supremacy, indecency, menace to property, destruction of social law and order." An armed white paramilitary rode the countryside to make its supremacist preferences plain; dressed in crimson, they became known as the Red Shirts.

That same year, Battle witnessed the appearance in New Bern of men unlike any he had ever seen: young black men wearing the uniform of the U.S. soldier and preparing for duty in the Spanish-American War. President McKinley had called for volunteers, and a soon-to-be ousted North Carolina governor enabled African-Americans to enlist in regiments attached to white militia. On leave, many of them traveled to New Bern—a majority black town—for recreation. To whites, they were arrogant armed men who personified a refusal to accept the lot assigned to blacks; to Battle, they embodied adventure. He dashed to the tracks to watch as they went off by train.

But he understood that he was not yet ready to follow them. To acquire some of the polish he admired in the Delamar brothers, Battle went to work for Major Graham Davies, whose family lived on grounds large enough for a mansion and a second house. He tended the lawns, gardens, and shrubbery; pumped drinking water from a well; and brought soft water for the laundry from a rain cistern. Indoors, he emptied chamber pots and fanned away flies by

Samuel J. Battle, the NYPD's first black police officer, in 1911.



pulling a cord that waved paper strips over the dining table. Eventually he became one of the family's mealtime waiters.

"There," Battle said, "I learned how people of real culture and refinement behave, converse, and live." He added, "My period of work with this family of the Old South was a happy one and it was with some regret that I left them." In 1899, at the age of 16, "feeling myself a man," Battle went north.

He traveled by boat, a ticket on an Old Dominion steamship being less expensive than going by train. The Old Dominion's service to New York from Richmond and Norfolk, Virginia, was becoming a primary transportation for early black migrants on the Eastern Seaboard. In 1898, the year before Battle made the voyage, one New York man observed, "On every Old Dominion Steamship that docked there (were) from two to three hundred Negroes landed in New York."

But, for blacks, New York was anything but the Promised Land. For decades after the Civil War, the number of African-Americans in the city had remained constantly small—clustered first in the notorious Five Points section of Lower Manhattan; then pushed north into Greenwich Village and then further north into a roughedged place on Manhattan's West Side called the Tenderloin.

By modern standards, the Tenderloin was not a ghetto. The city's black population—counted at 60,666 in the 1900 census, less than two percent of the total—lacked the heft to claim a large area. Instead, blacks lived scattered, on a block here and a block there.

As would long be the case, their buildings carried the highest rents and were the least maintained. The census put the number of working black men at 20,395, with well more than half holding jobs as servants, waiters, porters, or laborers. There were but 32 black doctors and 26 black lawyers.

Battle was a country teenager come North with wide eyes, navigating the hustle and muck of the streets, looking up at the train engines overhead belching smoke and showering sparks. Where the sun came into view, he saw a sky etched with cables strung helter-skelter to carry electricity every which way. Crossing Manhattan's busiest north-south thoroughfare, he encountered the New York Police Department's Broadway squad, the

best the department had to offer. All the men were at least six feet one and resplendent in brassbuttoned uniforms.

Beyond Battle's purview were darker truths—that the New York Police Department was infused with brutality, corruption, and racism. Its ranks, 7,500 strong, were filled largely by ill-educated Irishmen who were given to the liberal use of a club called the "locust," so named for the close-grained wood from which it was hewn. They took orders from the bosses of Tammany Hall, the all-powerful Democratic Party machine. Many blurred the distinction between cop and criminal.

THERE WASN'T MUCH CALL IN NEW YORK FOR A partly educated adolescent, let alone one who was black. Battle fell back on the skills he had learned as a servant in the Davies household. He found a position as a houseboy or, more politely, as a houseman in the home of a retired Spanish banker and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Gelio Andreini, on West 75th Street, just feet from Central Park. His salary was 25 dollars a month plus meals. He remembered Mr. Andreini as "a fine, liberal man" and Mrs. Andreini as a "charitable church woman," although she "was so exacting that she made her household staff work like slaves."

Battle lived modestly in a three-dollar-a-month room on West 59th Street, not far from the location today of the 55-story Time Warner Center. It was north of the Tenderloin, on the edge of another area where blacks concentrated among larger numbers of whites. Stretching six or seven blocks above 59th Street, the neighborhood had



The Tenderloin in 1910, at 34th Street and Sixth Avenue.

The neighborhood above 59th Street had strict racial divisions, blacks toward the bottom of a slope, whites toward the top. There was constant racial skirmishing, and the enclave came to be called San Juan Hill, after the site of Teddy Roosevelt's Spanish-American War victory.

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strict racial divisions, blacks toward the bottom of a slope, whites toward the top. There was constant racial skirmishing, and the enclave came to be called San Juan Hill after the site in Cuba of Teddy Roosevelt's Spanish-American War victory.

Battle's landlord took a liking to him. He taught him to play the bridge-like card game whist and gave Battle a brush with greatness. Among the players who joined Battle at the card table was a curly-haired man with light cocoa skin—the great Arthur Schomburg.

A decade older than Battle and employed as a law firm clerk, Schomburg had already embarked on his life's work of collecting the lost histories and overlooked accomplishments of people of color. Perseverance as a bibliophile would make him a seminal figure of modern African-American history and place his name, in 1940, on what would become the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Battle remembered that Schomburg "took special interest in me" at their twice-weekly card playing. Schomburg believed that blacks needed to stand on the same intellectual level as whites. He impressed upon Battle that learning was imperative. He stressed reading the newspapers—Timothy Thomas Fortune's *New York Age* and the white newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *New York Tribune*, and *New York Evening Post*.

Seemingly wherever Battle went, he encountered African-Americans of accomplishment. The Reverend Alexander Walters occupied the pulpit of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Battle's congregation, and was a seminal civil rights leader. He and the *New York Age*'s Timothy Fortune published an open letter in 1889 calling for the National Afro-American League's creation. The league petered out, but Walters successfully urged Fortune to revive it as the Afro-American Council after the *Plessy* decision in 1896. Walters served as president for most of the first decade of the 20th century.

African-American fraternal organizations were also blooming into a key source of social cohesion. Battle joined the most prominent, the Elks, or more precisely the black Elks. The long-established Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks had barred African-Americans, prompting two blacks in Cincinnati to form the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World. The New York courts enjoined the use of that name, but no matter. The group carried on, and Battle mixed with the many leading African-Americans who took part. In 1905, he was a grand marshal in Brooklyn.

Six years after Battle left home with dreams of succeeding like the Delamars, he stepped into adulthood under a wife's grounding influence, marrying 16-year-old Florence Carrington, who had come to New York from Newport News, Virginia. A butler's income had paid for freeform bachelorhood, but it would hardly support a wife and family. Casting about, Battle heard that blacks his age were pulling down good money as luggage porters at the Grand Central Depot. The jobs were hard to get, and he would have to see the headman, the fearsome Chief James Williams, son of a former slave, who oversaw more than 400 porters. Williams

questioned Battle closely about everything he had done over the previous five years, then offered him a red cap.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD AROUND WEST 59TH STREET teemed with unemployed and underemployed men, women who went to work as domestics if they were lucky, and poorly clothed children, many of them ill-attended. On a single block just north of the Battle's apartment, more than 6,000 people were counted as living in tenements described as "human hives." The danger of white-on-black violence overshadowed the neighborhood—and the New York Police Department was the most feared threat.

Never did officers wield their nightsticks more vehemently than during the Siege of San Juan Hill. On a Friday evening in July 1905, about a month after Battle's wedding, a white gang was taunting an elderly white peddler on the gang's corner when a police roundsman ordered a black minister, who ran a nearby coal business, to go into his shop. The minister refused.

"You black——, get in there or I will knock your brains out," the roundsman ordered, according to the detailed retelling in the *Age*. Inside the store, the roundsman hit the minister. The minister grabbed a gun from a drawer. Police beat the minister senseless. Black residents swarmed the cops when they carried the minister outside. Across Battle's neighborhood, tensions ran high. The *Age* reported:

On Saturday Afro-Americans were bullied by the police. Respectable business citizens, if they stood for a minute, were told to get out of the way, and the first man arrested... was, according to his statement, beaten after being taken to the 68th Street station. Similar treatment was accorded to every prisoner that evening. On Sunday more needless arrests were made upon frivolous and concocted charges.

On Monday night, a police officer ordered men who were standing in front of a saloon three blocks from Battle's

apartment to get off the sidewalk and go inside. A brick thrown from a roof struck the officer's head.

Dozens of African-Americans were hauled to the stationhouse, where, the *Age* reported, "they found prepared for them a modified form of the Indian torture called 'running the gauntlet.'" One by one they were shoved into a darkened room in which "police officers with clubs proceeded to beat these upon the head and bodies until they were nearly dead."

For weeks after the nightsticks swirled around Battle and Florence's neighborhood, Timothy Fortune trained the *Age's* editorial firepower on police commissioner William McAdoo, whom, he said, had praised the police "in these 'riots'."

As 1905 closed, Fortune published an unsigned letter to the editor under a headline that exhorted, "Become Police and Firemen." The writer detailed the required physical qualifications: Barred were obesity, "rupture in any form," "fissures, fistulas, and external or internal piles," varicose veins, color-blindness, and much more, including "very offensive breath." It was mandatory that heart, brain, kidneys, and genitalia be in good working order.

The writer also warned—presciently, as Battle would discover—that an applicant might face medical sabotage after passing the written civil service test: "I am informed that it has been, and is now, the custom when Afro-Americans apply for examination for the examiners to fake up some technical physical defect and thereby reject them, while a white man in similar physical condition would be passed without question."

There was no rush of volunteers.

THEN, THREE YEARS LATER, IN 1908, HORRIFIC white-on-black racial violence erupted, the intensity of which was greater than anyone could remember. It took place in Springfield, Illinois, the city (population 47,000) that sent Abraham Lincoln to the White House and where the Great Emancipator was entombed. Under the watch of as many as 12,000 people, white rioters set a black neighborhood ablaze and cut firefighting hoses. Seven people died (two black, five white), more than 40 families lost homes, and many hundreds of blacks fled.

In reaction, journalist William English Walling wrote a magazine article headlined "Race War in the North." He concluded with these words: "Yet who realizes the seriousness of the situation, and what large and powerful body of citizens is ready to come to their aid?"

As 1905 closed, the black-oriented newspaper *New York Age* published an unsigned letter to the editor with a headline that exhorted, "Become Police and Firemen." The writer warned—presciently—that an applicant might face medical sabotage after passing the written civil service test.

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At roughly this moment, three African-American men gathered with history-changing purpose in Doyle's Saloon on the corner of Lenox Avenue and 136th Street.

J. Frank Wheaton—a friend of Battle's from the Elks—had been the first African-American to graduate from the University of Minnesota Law School. He'd moved to New York in 1905, served as an assistant district attorney, and opened a law practice. Bert Williams, another Battle acquaintance, was half of the vaudeville team Williams and Walker that introduced New York to the two-stepping dance called the cakewalk. In 1902,

Williams and Walker had made black theatrical history by opening a musical comedy in a Times Square theater. J. C. Thomas operated a funeral parlor for African-Americans in the Tenderloin; he was the dominant funeral director in the area. He'd scored a windfall when the Pennsylvania Railroad bought up his real estate investments for construction of a majestic Penn Station.

Wheaton, Williams, and Thomas each put a hundred dollars on the bar at Doyle's Saloon as a contribution to forming the Equity Congress, an organization dedicated to seeking social equality in practical terms. The proprietor, Doyle, a neighborhood Irishman whose first name is lost to time, also kicked in a hundred dollars, earning a place as the Equity Congress's fourth founding member. Whether Doyle acted out of principle or simply to buy goodwill among a growing black customer base will never be known.

The organization set two goals. The first was to force open to blacks those areas of the civil service that had been closed: the New York City police and fire departments. The second was to persuade New York's legislature and governor to establish a black National Guard regiment that would give the state's African-Americans entry into the U.S. military.

In the first week of 1909, another trio met to create a "powerful body of citizens"—suffragette Mary White Ovington, social worker Henry Moskowitz, and the socialist journalist Walling. They began by recruiting white progressives like themselves, including Oswald Garrison Villard, publisher of the *New York Evening Post*. And then they enlisted prominent blacks, including W. E. B. Du Bois, the intellectual spirit of the modern civil rights movement, and Battle's pastor, Rev. Walters. On February 12, the group called on "all believers in democracy to join in a national conference for . . . the renewal of the struggle for civil and political liberty."

Now seen as the founding event of the NAACP, the appeal engendered fresh hope among African-Americans,

not the least because of the commitment of whites to the cause.

"I did not know personally Oswald Garrison Villard, Mary White Ovington, or W. E. B. Du Bois, but I rejoiced in their courageous action," Battle said later.

Conferences were held in New York in 1909 and 1910. Battle closely followed developments and joined the nascent association.

"I am a life member," he said.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1909, BATTLE SAW THE DRIVE for national activism merge with rising appeals to integrate the New York Police Department. Congregants packed the pews of Battle's Mother AME Zion Church for an appearance by New York's second-highest elected official. Standing in for a vacationing mayor, Board of Aldermen President Patrick McGowan announced that he supported opening the police force to African-Americans, "in certain sections," as the *Age* paraphrased, to "end the clashes between the police and the blacks."

Amid the surge of advocacy, Battle decided to be the one. He chose, however, to be just another applicant and not to stand out as the black man who was daring to try for the police department.

The test was competitive. Ranking toward the top on the hiring list would be crucial. Among the exam topics were the Penal Law, the Code of Criminal Courts Act, the Dance Hall Law, the Civil Rights Law, the Education Law, the General Business Law, general city ordinances, arithmetic, and expertise in getting around the city.

Would-be police officers typically took classes at the Delehanty Institute, a school that readied candidates for civil service tests. Battle found his way there, only to be barred from admission.

In an interview with the writer Langston Hughes, he related:

I bought a book, "How to Become a Patrolman," purchased from "The Police Chronicle" for fifty cents. My new book indicated other volumes, lists and useful materials which I secured. I used every available moment of free time for study. I carried my books in my pocket while on duty at Grand Central and I spent most of my lunch hour concentrating on them. After I had swept up behind the horses at the cabstand and finished my other cleaning duties, I read while waiting trains. By the time I got home in the evenings it would often be after eight o'clock. As soon as supper was over, I would tackle my studies again. I sometimes fell asleep in my chair after a hard day's work.

At the age of 26, Battle strode into the test center on the appointed day in 1910. He was alone among 637 white faces. They could not turn him away because blacks were entitled by law to sit for civil service tests. At home afterward,

Battle told Florence that he seemed to know the material. They would have to wait to find out whether he had known enough. When the city published the results, Battle found his name at the 199th place—in the top third of the pack, easily high enough to be called for the mandatory physical.

As Battle's name rose toward the top of the hiring list, he was called for the medical exam. Now there was no hiding his skin color. He was big and strong and black. And he was stoppable.

The police surgeon diagnosed Battle as suffering from a heart murmur, thus providing a pretext for disqualifying him. At first, the doctor's findings mystified Battle. Having carried "tons of baggage miles per week," he was sure he was fit. He was passed over once, and then twice on the list. A friend, Thomas Henry Peyton, warned him that a third rejection would doom his chances.

Peyton had a position in the lower ranks of the police department, doing what amounted to the work of a doorman. Battle recalled:

One day when I was working in Grand Central, [Peyton] came up to me and said, "Sam, do you know that your name is about to be dropped to the bottom of the list, of civil service? The police commissioner hasn't appointed you."

I said, "I didn't know, I thought someday they might appoint me."

He said, "No. Don't allow your name to go to the bottom of the list. Go and ask for another examination, something of that kind. Do something about it."

Thanks to Peyton, Battle realized that he needed help. One man came to mind: Frederick Randolph Moore, the editor since 1907 of the *Age*.

Moore summoned surprised black allies, to help apply pressure. Among them were Democrats (such as the leaders of Tammany Hall's United Colored Democracy); and Republicans (including Charles Anderson, commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service in New York). Wheaton, Williams, and Thomas's Equity Congress, by now a thriving organization, promised full support.

Together, Moore and Battle also approached Dr. E. P. Roberts, but the three men soon agreed that Roberts's medical expertise would be meaningless because he was black. Regretfully but realistically, Roberts referred Battle to an eminent white physician, Dr. James Dowling. Battle recollected:

When Dr. Dowling finished with me he said, "You are the most perfect physical specimen I have ever examined." I then asked him to check my heart again, because I had to prepare myself for strenuous work, and that was what had given me concern. He rechecked my heart. When he had finished this second examination, he said, "Your heart is in perfect shape. There is nothing wrong at all."

Without informing him of the rejection by the police

surgeons, I asked Dr. Dowling for a certificate as to my state of health, again stressing attention to my heart. He sat down and made out a complete report on me. As he was about to sign it, I requested him to put all of his full professional titles down behind his name. With a smile he did so, closing not only with Professor of Diagnosis and Consulting Surgeon, but President of Flower Hospital, one of the leading city hospitals of that day. . . .

That evening I took the certificate to Editor Fred Moore. He wrote a letter to Mayor Gaynor enclosing it.

The weeks dragged by without action. In February 1911, Moore wrote again to Mayor William Jay Gaynor, and this time Gaynor responded tersely: "I do not understand that the man you mention is in danger of discrimination whatever."

Wheaton pressed police commissioner Rhinelander Waldo, and the IRS's Anderson also lobbied the mayor. Finally, after more than three months, the department summoned Battle for a second medical exam.

"A young white man in line just ahead of me fainted dead away as he stood before the doctor," Battle remembered. "When my turn came I said pointedly, 'I'm sure you will find nothing wrong with me, sir—but the color of my skin. No doubt, that young fellow who just fell out in a cold sweat on the floor will pass his examination—because he is white.'"

This time, the doctor said, "I don't find anything wrong with you—or your heart."

At last, Commissioner Waldo designated Battle a candidate for the New York Police Department.

"The next morning headlines announced my appointment," Battle recalled. The Negro press acclaimed him "almost as much," he said, as they had Jack Johnson when he "won the heavyweight championship." At the age of 28, Battle had made history. He was Greater New York's first black cop.

Mentioning Battle only offhandedly as "this colored man," the IRS's Anderson wrote to Booker T. Washington: "The Equity Congress and Frank Wheaton are claiming credit for the appointment. I have said nothing, but from the tenor of the Mayor's letter, in which he asks me to 'see that the appointee will be a credit to his race,' it looks as though the Mayor felt that I had something to do with it."

Battle's backers moved on, and he was left to a solitary fight, as alone as if he were behind enemy lines.

Which he was. ■

Arthur Browne '72 is the editorial page editor of the *New York Daily News* and a recipient of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing. This excerpt is drawn and adapted from his new book *One Righteous Man: Samuel Battle and the Shattering of the Color Line in New York* (Beacon Press, 2015) and is reprinted with permission from Beacon Press. The book may be ordered at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore via [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).



Lt. Battle with New York mayor Fiorello LaGuardia in 1941.

## AND AFTERWARD

IN SUCCEEDING CHAPTERS of *One Righteous Man*, Arthur Browne follows Samuel Battle's career with the NYPD, including the two years at the start when he endured the silent treatment from fellow officers. Battle served in the partly black San Juan Hill neighborhood from 1911, before being assigned to Harlem in 1913.

In 1926 he made sergeant, and in 1935 he became a lieutenant—more firsts for a black man. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia named him to the Parole Commission in 1941, to fill the seat of the late Lou Gehrig. He served 10 years before retiring.

Battle understood the historical import of his experiences. In 1949, he employed the Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes to write his biography, and the two met for extensive interviews. The project didn't attract a publisher, but former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt read the pages and wrote a heartfelt preface:

This is a record of a man's life and as he tells it you not only see one life but you see the struggles and the victories and the defeats of a whole group of U.S. citizens. What courage it took, what remarkable stamina, to be the first Colored policeman in New York City: There were qualities of mind and heart and body that were purely personal but above everything else there was the realization that he was fighting not for himself alone but for his people.

Battle died in his Harlem home on August 7, 1966, at the age of 83, leaving his wife, Florence, a daughter and son, two grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

# End Notes

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## From the Burns Library

Upon James Joyce's death from intestinal surgery in a Zurich hospital on January 13, 1941, Swiss sculptor Paul Speck was brought in by a family friend to make a mold of the novelist's face. Speck made at least two and likely three plaster castings. Approximately seven bronzes were produced from these in the 1950s; another nine in 2000. The Burns bronze is from the latter group. Acquired this year, the death mask is featured in an exhibition tracing the publication of *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegan's Wake* titled *Unhemmed As It Is Uneven: Joyce's Odyssey in Print*, on display through September 12.





On October 2, 1897, the *Globe* mentioned the Baptist Debating Society's discussion of whether "the North Pole Expeditions are Beneficial."

## TIDBITS

Compiled by Samantha Costanzo '15 and Alexandra Rae Hunt '17

19th-century news from the *Boston Globe*

FROM 1885 to 1898, THE BOSTON GLOBE, THEN ONE OF seven daily newspapers in the city, published "Boston College Notes," short collections of brief notices about life on the original South End campus. Sometimes for days at a time, though mostly at irregular intervals, the Notes appeared amid dense columns of other thumbnail local news items—e.g., "Stolen Ride Was His Last" and "Constable Barry's Silver Wedding"—generally near the sports stories. Other colleges occasionally were noticed (especially Boston University) but none as frequently as Boston College, a nod, almost certainly, to the local roots of most of the 20-something-year-old college's graduates. Some excerpts:

Tuesday, November 3, 1885: The college has disbanded the old cheer and by common consent adopted the following. Bos-ton — 'Rah! — 'Rah! — 'Rah! — Boston College — 'st! — Boom! — Rah——!

Friday, November 27, 1885: Five Electric clocks, connected with the observatory at Cambridge, have been placed in the college, the sacristy of the Immaculate Conception, and the corridors of the [Jesuit] residence.

Saturday, January 16, 1886: Pierce J. Grace, '89, has designed a handsome set of college colors of maroon and old gold and will make a formal presentation next Friday.

Thursday, January 28, 1886: The increase in the number of students [297, up from 264] has been so great during the past year that the president, Rev. E. V. Boursaud, S. J., has concluded to add a new wing to the main building of the college, as there are not a sufficient number of class rooms to accommodate all. The foundation will be laid in the spring, and the wing, which is to extend into what now comprises the college garden, will when completed contain a new chemical laboratory, accommodations for the English depart-

ment, which will be conducted as usual under Professor [Francis] Harkins, and an extension of Boston College Hall.

**Saturday, June 5, 1886:** The long-talked-of project of forming an alumni association has at length been put into active operation. Permission having been obtained of Father Boursaud, circulars have been addressed to all graduates of the college by Edward J. Flynn, '81, inviting all to assemble next Monday evening in the lecture hall of the college to discuss the subject, and if the formation of such a society be deemed expedient, to elect officers and give the association a fair start.

**Friday, November 11, 1887:** The drama of "The King and the Angel," which the dramatic class is now rehearsing, promises to be a grand production.

**Saturday, April 4, 1891:** The public prize debate of the Fulton Debating Society will be held on May 21. The following question will be discussed: 'Resolved, that Lincoln's emancipation proclamation was unwise.'

**Friday, September 25, 1891:** St. Valentine's Total Abstinence Society, connected with the Church of the Immaculate Conception [the Jesuit parish affiliated with Boston College], will hold a grand temperance rally on Father Mathew's day, Oct. 10.

**Thursday, February 11, 1892:** Mr. James B. Machugh, '81, who has been connected with the college for several years as instructor in stenography and typewriting, has resigned.

**Friday, November 25, 1892:** The Agassiz Natural History Association go on a geological expedition to Nahant.

**Saturday, September 22, 1894:** Mr. P. C. Shortis, the well-known banjoist, has tendered his services as instructor to the banjo club.

**Monday, September 30, 1895:** Bernard J. Wefers '98, who has been attracting world-wide attention by his running, will probably return to the college this week. Preparations are being made to accord him a rousing reception upon his arrival today at his native town, Lawrence. [Wefers—who left Boston College prior to receiving a diploma—held the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America record for the 100-yard dash from 1896 to 1897, and shared the world records for the 200 meter and 220 yard dashes from 1896 to 1921. Before achieving fame as "the world's fastest human," he captained Boston College's first football team.]

**Wednesday, March 25, 1891:** Rev. William Orr of Cambridge, who met with a severe accident not long ago, has again offered three prizes of \$20, \$10 and \$5 each for the best essay on the subject "Practical and Open Profession of Catholicity is no Hindrance to Worldly Success."

**Tuesday, May 26, 1891:** The college nine was disbanded yesterday by order of the faculty, on account of dissatisfaction. All dates will accordingly be cancelled.

**Tuesday, November 8, 1892:** The old-time custom of Jesuit colleges of having a roll of honor, on which will be inscribed the names of all those students who have attained testimonials in their three classes, will be revived at this college.

**Saturday, March 28, 1896:** The deaf mute society, which holds its weekly meetings at the college hall, under the direction of Mr. John J. Doody SJ, is continuously increasing in numbers, and its work has been recently extended.

**Saturday, October 2, 1897:** The manager of the Holy Cross

football team has reserved two dates for games with the college. This is welcome news to the students, as it was thought that the two teams would not meet this fall, owing to the trouble on the South End grounds last November, when Holy Cross left the field, dissatisfied with the outcome of the contest. ■

## This Morning's Pep Talk at Egg Island

By Brendan Galvin '60

Even the kids negotiating friendships  
on that yellow schoolbus racketting past  
know it's a different scenario  
every day, not just the same elemental  
hostilities like ocean versus sand,  
tough places to make a living.

To see things

as they are, keep your eyes open. This morning  
on the bay side of Egg Island I watched  
as water instantly grew a head—a gray seal  
arriving for winter, no being more seamlessly  
suited to its métier.

Wings alternating black  
and white will be another grand opening  
if you lift your own head out of theory  
in time to catch the orange-brown flash  
and shift of snow buntings.

Knock those quotes

off "reality" and work with it. Yesterday  
I had to set a blue-headed vireo  
hitting a window against the way a merlin  
running down a flicker screaming  
just above my head—I felt both windrafts  
passing—lost her this time in the trees.

Nothing like a little gift here  
and there to help nudge things your way:  
consider the nuthatches talking together  
where suet's hung in the striped  
maple's golden canopy.

Calculate, cultivate  
the proximity of happenings to happiness,  
and take your disappointments by the throat,  
the way that praying mantis who cringed  
childlike at the introduction of my stick  
into her world grabbed it with both hands  
the second time, manipulating it  
to let me know how strong she was.

Brendan Galvin has published 17 collections of poems, including *Habitat* (2005), a finalist for the National Book Award. This poem is contained in *The Air's Accomplices*, published this year by Louisiana State University Press. The book may be ordered at a discount via [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).



Betty's living room in Paris, Missouri, photographed on February 20, 2015.

## ASSISTED LIVING

By George Hodgman, MA'83

### The son's return

MISSOURI IS A STATE OF STOLEN NAMES, BESTOWED to bring the world a little closer: Versailles, Rome, Cairo, New London, Athens, Carthage, Alexandria, Lebanon, Cuba, Japan, Santa Fe, Cleveland, Canton, California, Caledonia, New Caledonia, Mexico, Louisiana. Paris, our home.

Then there are the funny-named places. Licking is a favorite, along with Fair Play, Strain, Elmo, Peculiar, Shook, Lone Jack, Butts, Lupus, Moody, Clover, Polo, Shake Rag, and the T towns that always end my list—Turtle, Tightwad, Tulip, and Tea.

When I cannot sleep, I try to see how many I can still name, an old game played with my parents when I was a kid looking out the car window at the rolling brown waters of the Mississippi.

SOMETHING HAS AWAKENED ME, THOUGH INSIDE THERE is only the sound of the air conditioner and outside it is pitch black

and quiet, but for the trains. The clock says 2:30, give or take. I won't go back to sleep. Where am I? Not in my apartment; there are no sirens, horns, or streaks of neon shining through the blinds. This is not Manhattan, not Chelsea, not West 23rd Street. I am home, in Paris, Missouri, population 1,246 and falling. Living here, I say to myself, for just a few more days or weeks. For now. Until Carol, the good-hearted farm woman who helps watch out for Betty, recovers from surgery on her rotator cuff. Or until my mother can be admitted to an assisted-living facility. Until there is rain, or Betty's spirits mend, or I get a regular job again. Until something happens here on Sherwood Road, and my mother is gone, and I must close up shop.

I hear Betty's voice from the hall: "Who turned up the air conditioning so high? He's trying to freeze me out."

And here she is, all 90 years of her, curlers in disarray, chuckling

a bit to herself for no reason, peeking into our guest room where I have been mostly not sleeping. It is the last place in America with shag carpet. In it, I have discovered what I believe to be a toenail from high school.

On the spare bed, there is a quilt with stars and crescent moons, figures of girls and boys joining hands along the borders, and the embroidered signatures of long-gone farm women, including my great-aunt Mabel's. I am installed here, along with the Christmas wrappings, the desk of Betty's uncle Oscar, and the bed I slept in with my grandmother as a boy, listening to Mammy's snores and the sound of the furnace started into service. My grandmother's home in the village of Madison, 10 or so miles west of us, where my mother grew up, was nicknamed the House of Many Chimneys. In the garden by the back door there were pink roses, which my grandmother, half blind and old, fretted over constantly, nicking her fingers on the thorns.

The hallway light is on. Betty has been in the kitchen, cadging a snack as she does in the middle of the night after being awakened by the need for the bathroom or dreams that make her cry out. Something—her dreams, her thoughts, her memories—hounds my mother at night. A light sleeper, she toddles around in her thick white socks, clearing her throat loudly, veering slightly from side to side, turning on the coffee, which will be cold by morning, checking to see if everything is in her own odd idea of order. After she has gone to bed, I try to light the path she takes to the kitchen in the dark, leaving on the lamp in my father's office, along with one in the foyer, to provide a trail to guide her through the hall.

"Are you awake?" my mother asks.

"I am now," I say.

Betty, who I recently discovered sorting through the contents of my suitcase, turns on the overhead light in my room, wrinkles her brow and peers in like a camp counselor on an inspection tour, as if she suspects I might be entertaining someone who has paddled in from across the lake. She must keep an eye out. I am a schemer. There are things going on behind her back, plans afoot, she fears. She has no intention of cooperating with any of them. When the phone rings, she listens to every word, not sure if she can trust me with her independence. I don't blame her. I am an unlikely guardian. A month ago I thought the Medicare doughnut hole was a breakfast special for seniors. I am a care inflictor.

She's not easy to corral. Her will remains at blast-force strength. "It's a hot day, but I'm going to that sale," she murmured last week in her sleep as outside the temperature soared past a hundred and, in her dream, she jabbed her finger up to place a bid. She is testier with me than anyone, sometimes slapping the air if I come too close. There are days I cannot please her. Carol, who has worked in nursing homes, says that old people who are failing get the angriest with those they are most attached to, the people who make them realize they are no longer themselves. But Betty's crankiness is an act, I think, a way to conceal her embarrassment at having to ask anything of anyone. When I do something for her, she looks away. Accustomed to fending for herself, she hates all this.

"I WAS WORRIED," BETTY SAYS. "YOU SAID LAST NIGHT YOU couldn't sleep. I was warned you wouldn't sleep tonight." She stares at me.

"No, I'm sleeping. I'm asleep. Right now I'm talking in my sleep."

"You're in bed in your clothes again."

"I dozed off reading."

(Actually, I go to bed in clothes because I am waiting to be called into action, anticipating a fall, or stroke, or shout out. She seems so frail when I tuck her in. I keep the ambulance number, along with the one for the emergency room, on my bedside table.)

I hear Betty's voice from the hall: "Who turned up the air conditioning so high? He's trying to freeze me out." And here she is, all 90 years of her, curlers in disarray, chuckling to herself for no reason.

"It isn't a good thing for people to go to bed in their clothes. . . . The *Appeal* didn't come today," she complains.

Our little town's newspaper, which reports civic events, charitable campaigns, and church news—including the "Movement of the Spirit" at the Full Gospel Church—has appeared erratically recently, possibly because of the increasingly short-staffed post office. This is the kind of lag that can throw my mother into crisis mode. She wants what she wants when she wants it.

"Did someone call today? From the church? I can't find my other shoe, the Mephisto."

I say we will look in the morning, and my mother, somewhat satisfied, almost smiles. For a second, there is the old Betty, who does not often appear now, my old friend.

In St. Louis, when we turn off Skinker onto Delmar, not far from the University City gates, Betty always points out the place where, as a young woman, working as a secretary at Union Electric, she waited for the streetcar. She seldom mentions the past, but loves to return to that old streetcar stop. Back in the 1940s, after the war, she was a pretty girl with wavy light brown hair, fresh from the "Miss Legs" contest at the university. Listening to her memories, I see her in a cast-off coat, not long after the war, looking down the tracks toward Webster Groves where she stayed with her aunt, called Nona. There is innocence in her expression, excitement at her new city life as she stands by other women in expensive dresses, the sort that Mammy never allowed her to buy. Sometimes I wonder whether she wishes she had gotten on that streetcar and ridden it to some other life.

By the time my mother realized that she was smart or saw she had the kind of looks that open doors, she had already closed too many to go back. "I just wanted a house with a few nice things," she told me once. "That was my little dream."

BETTY—ACTUALLY ELIZABETH, OR, ON HER BEST STATIONERY, Elizabeth Baker Hodgman—doesn't see well at all. Certain

corners of the world are blurred. Her hearing sometimes fails her, but it is often difficult to determine whether she is missing something or simply choosing not to respond. Also, she is suffering from dementia or maybe worse.

Some days she is just about fine, barking orders at Earleen, our cleaning lady, sharp enough to play bridge with her longtime partners. Other times, though, she is a lost girl with sad eyes. I am scared I am going to break her. I am new at all this.

We have hunts for liquid tears, or checks, or hearing aids, or the blouse Earleen was supposed to have ironed for church. The mind of my mother has often drifted away from peripheral matters. She has always been busy on the inside, a little far away.

Now more than ever, she is in and out, more likely to drift off into her own world for a minute or two. Or sit staring for long spells with a vacant look. Or forget the name of someone she knew, back then, before she had to worry about not remembering. In the afternoons, her whimpers and moans, her little chats with herself are all I hear in the house. The nights, especially just before bed, are the worst. She knows something is happening to her, but would never say so. We circle around her sadness, but she will not let me share it. Acknowledging anything would make it real. These, I fear, are her last days as herself.

MY MOTHER ALWAYS DROVE FAST, never stayed home. In the old days, we sped across the plains in our blue Impala, radio blaring DJ Johnny Rabbit's all-American voice on KXOK St. Louis. She took me to the county line where I waited for the bus to kindergarten. My mother—"too damn high strung," my father said—stayed in the bathroom fussing with her hair and smoking Kent cigarettes until the very last minute. "I look like something the cat drug in," she told herself, frowning into the mirror.

When she finally came out, I'd be sitting on the hood of the car, my Batman lunchbox already empty except for wads of foil and a few hastily scraped carrots.

"I'm a nervous wreck," I'd cry out. "I was one child, raised mostly among adults. I repeated what I heard and didn't get half of what I was saying."

"Why are you just sitting there?" she'd yell as if I were the one delaying things.

Those mornings, heading to school, I learned to love pop music, a lifelong fixation. My mother and I sang along to "This Diamond Ring" by Gary Lewis and the Playboys, "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling" by the Righteous Brothers, and Petula Clark's "Downtown." Betty took her shoe off the foot she used for the gas pedal and almost floored it.

I like fast things, and the highway between Madison and Moberly will always be one of the places where I will see my

mother, hair wrapped in rollers under a scarf, wearing a pair of sunglasses, taking me off into the big wide world.

"What are you looking at, little demon?" she would ask.

"Don't bug me," I'd say. "Mind your own business."

"You are my business."

"Betty," my father often said, "no one would mistake that kid for anyone's but yours."

I was Betty's boy.

This year, Betty had to give up her driver's license after backing into a ditch. Now she must sit home, awaiting invitations. "They won't even let me go to the grocery store," she says. Her eyes are wistful and her fingers, with their chipped pink polish, are itchy for the feel of car keys.

SUDDENLY, BETTY YELLS OUT. "OH GOD," I THINK AS I run to her, trip on a hair curler, and barely escape ankle injury.

"What is it?" I ask as I approach her door. "What is it?"

"Say," she begins, "you didn't get toilet paper."

We go through enough toilet paper for an army. I think she is involved with some sort of art project. A kind of Christo thing.

"I'll get some tomorrow," I say.

"That suits me," she answers, pausing before asking, "Did you make me a hair appointment?"

"I told them it was an emergency."

It is 3 A.M. I steal a cigarette from my mother's old, hidden cache and sit out on the step in front of our house in the dark. The mailbox made by my father is falling apart now. I would fix it, but am not handy. Nor do I assemble. A trip to Ikea is enough to unhinge me. I would prefer a spinal tap to putting together a coffee table.

I am running out of meals I know how to prepare. Tonight, feeling nostalgic, I rolled out tuna casserole made with Campbell's Mushroom Soup and crushed potato chips.

"I didn't know anyone still made this," she said.

"I was trying to think outside the box . . . Mushrooms are vegetables. Or are they a fungus?"

"Be still."

Mushrooms, I realized, are a fungus. I had served my mother a fungus casserole. With barbecue potato chips.

"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PERFECT PARENT." Betty always said that. But to me she was perfect. Especially when she thought she was not. In grade school, on holidays, the mothers brought refreshments. Popcorn balls—crunchy white confections with the popped kernels held together with sorghum—were my favorite. When it was her turn to bring treats, Betty asked what I wanted. I said, "Popcorn balls." She said, "Oh brother," and lit a cigarette.



Betty, circa 1945.

The kitchen was not her natural habitat. Her tendency to never turn things off led to exploding percolators and smoky puffs from toasters. A day after my popcorn-ball request, I found Betty in front of the oven in her hair rollers, which were held in place with pink picks that tended to turn up all around the house. The kitchen, never a page from *Good Housekeeping*, was strewn with bowls and baking sheets. Sticky lumps of popcorn and fallen curlers were everywhere. On a tray there was a strange grouping of misshapen popcorn balls.

When I said they were supposed to be all the same size, Betty appeared exasperated, harassed, so forlorn and disappointed. She had failed. Nothing was right. She thought she had to be some kind of model mother.

I reached for a ball and took a bite. "I think these are the best I've had," I told her as I stuck some of the picks from her curlers into the balls so they would look a little snazzy.

"Why are you doing that?" she said.  
"Go outside and throw something."

MY MOTHER SHOULD NOT LIVE ALONE now, but vetoes all conventional alternatives. I try to pretend I am in control. It is my time to play the grownup and I don't want the part. "Don't put me in a place with a lot of old people," she says.

"Fine," I say to myself. "I'll go."

In my apartment in New York there are tumbling piles of books and, in the refrigerator, cartons of take-out food I forgot to throw out. By now it must have sprouted new life forms. I imagine squatters with grimy faces, warming their hands over fires crackling from large rusty barrels.

Chickens are running everywhere, clucking and bursting madly into flight. I am probably going to have to stay here in Missouri and become a horse whisperer.

I have three pairs of pants and about five summer shirts, food-stained from my culinary efforts. This visit, for my mother's birthday, was supposed to last two weeks. It is getting on two months. I lost my job; I have the time. I am not a martyr. I am just available, an unemployed editor relegated to working freelance.

I think about leaving, but cannot seem to make it to the plane. My fingers will not dial the American Airlines number and I realize that my place in New York would feel very empty if I returned. I miss the company of people from work. I'd miss Betty, too. Turns out I am a person who needs people. I hate that.

"Don't leave me," Betty says, if I go to bed before she is ready also. "Are you going to leave me?" If I start to move my work to my father's desk in the back of the house, forsaking the card table near the couch that is her center of command, she begs me to stay. She sits beside me all day, always wants me near, a real change from the woman who was always shooing me away, off to camp or college, or the next phase, off to be independent.

If I allow someone else to take her to the doctor—the foot doc-

tor, say, not an emergency situation—she is angry for a day or two. This is how it is now.

My mother is scared. I cannot believe it. But she will not speak of her fears. She is locked up tight. She keeps her secrets. I keep mine. That is our way. We have always struggled with words.

I am never certain quite what I will wake up to. Recently, as she was preparing for our daily walk, I discovered her trying to put her sock on over her shoe. This interlude, I know, cannot last. My life, such as it is, is on hold. I am worried by how we are living now, scared of drifting, losing footing on my own ground. Soon she will need more than I can provide, but she is not ready to give up. Despite her vision, her fading hearing, her stomach problems, and the rest, she tries to hold on in this place that is so familiar, her home.

It is the smallest things that trouble my mother most—the glass

broken, the roast she cannot bake right, the can opener she cannot command to do its work, the TV remote control she cannot operate. Tell her the house is on fire and she will go on with the newspaper. Tell her you cannot find her address book and she will almost fold. Yet she has always been a determined woman, a force. She has been my rock and I am convinced that, at some level, she has survived to give me—a gay man whose life she has never understood—a place to call home.

In her wake now, a pair of open cabinets, dirty Kleenexes and crumbs, cantaloupe seeds on the couch and the floor, bills she intends to pay, food left out to spoil. I polish the silver, fix her meals, buy her new bracelets, leave Peppermint Patties under her pillow, drive her to her battalion of doctors. I buy mountains of fresh fruit, still—like ice cream—a luxury for a woman raised in the country during

the Depression. Even after decades of relative prosperity, a bowl of fresh strawberries remains a thing of beauty to her, a wonderful surprise. She spies them with the delight of an excited girl. I am not a martyr. I am just available, an unemployed editor relegated to working freelance. If only, just once in a while, she could look a little happier. I know that her days are numbered in this house, built by my father, where deer run in the backyard and Sara Dawson down the street watches for Betty's light in the mornings, in the kitchen window where so many times I have seen my mother's face watching out for me as I turned into the driveway. For both of us, finally, I know, these are our final days of home. I am a loner, but I hate to lose people. I can only imagine how scary it is to know that the person one is losing is oneself. ■

George Hodgman, MA '83, is a magazine and book editor and the author of *Bettyville: A Memoir*, from which this essay is drawn, published by arrangement with Viking, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © 2015 by George Hodgman. The book may be ordered at a discount via [bc.edu/bcm](http://bc.edu/bcm).



Betty, photographed on January 20, 2015.

# HOLD EVERYTHING

By David Levin

High-performing, biodegradable, and plastic

Jeffery Byers, an assistant professor of chemistry, is quick to point out that we're surrounded by plastic. Synthetic materials such as polystyrene, polypropylene, and polyethylene are used in nearly everything we own, from the bumpers on our cars to coffee cups to the polar fleece on our backs in winter. The problem is that the molecules that constitute most plastics are derived from petrochemicals, so they require a nonrenewable resource—oil—for their manufacture. And they don't break down easily when discarded. "A bottle we might use once can take years to degrade," he says.

Byers, who earned his doctorate at the California Institute of Technology, has just received a \$655,000 CAREER Award from the National Science Foundation to support his research on the development and behavior of alternative materials called "bioplastics." Rather than utilizing oil, these are derived from biodegradable substances like polylactic acid (PLA), which is itself formed from lactic acid, a molecule that is a key component of metabolism in most plants and animals. PLA bioplastics, which have been used for the last decade in certain food packaging, have a few distinct advantages over traditional plastics. They're created from sources (commonly referred to as feedstocks) such as corn starch or sugar cane that are plentiful and renewable, and they are readily biodegradable. But, Byers says, most current PLA-based products are relatively brittle—they tear or break more easily than comparable petroleum-based plastics.

Existing processes convert corn dextrose into PLA resins through a complex chemical reaction involving fermentation and catalysis—introducing chemical agents to kickstart a reaction linking molecules of feedstock into molecular chains called polymers. The results are mixed. "You wind up with PLA molecules of different configurations, and that affects the plastic's physical properties," says Byers, making it difficult to control how the resulting materials behave.

Another concern is that the current method of producing PLA uses tin or other toxic heavy metals as catalysts. According to Byers, those metals, in addition to their toxicity, are far from ideal for the job. Tin provides poor reactivity as a catalyst, and it lacks versatility in terms of the architecture of molecules it can generate. "It's kind of surprising that tin is even used," he says.

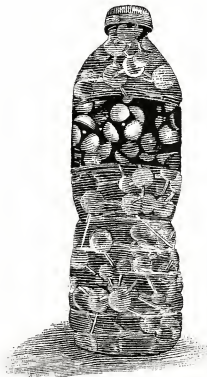
Byers is working on ways to employ different chemical forms of iron as catalysts. The beauty of a metal like iron, he says, is that it's inexpensive, abundant, safe for humans, and—most important—allows a certain amount of control by chemists compared to other metals. Unlike some metals, iron can exist in many different forms, known as "oxidation states." For example, oxygen can convert iron metal into rust by removing electrons from the metal (the process is called oxidation). Under certain controlled circumstances, the oxidation can be reversed in a process called reduction.

Reduction occurs if the oxidized iron is exposed to a family of chemicals that add electrons to the metal.

By adding and subtracting electrons in this way, Byers creates a chemical "switch" that controls how the metal functions. Under normal circumstances, the iron-based catalyst that Byers has developed is active for the production of PLA, but when it is oxidized, the catalyst becomes completely inactive for PLA production. Byers's research team has discovered the opposite reactivity in another class of useful carbon-oxygen molecules called epoxides (i.e., the catalyst is active in its oxidized form but is inactive upon catalyst reduction). The complementary reactivity of epoxides and lactic acid allow Byers's team to control the composition of PLA-based polymers. "Such control," Byers says, "provides unique opportunities to develop biodegradable polymers with a broader array of physical and mechanical properties."

As part of his CAREER grant research, Byers hopes to experiment with other types of metals, as well as new varieties of biologically derived raw materials. "If we can precisely control the chemical reaction that produces the polymer we can potentially make polymers that are branched or cyclic [ring-shaped]," he notes. Since the physical properties of a material are dictated by the structure of its molecules, the ability to create specific molecular shapes using new materials would let chemists and engineers dial in the properties (flexibility, say, or smoothness) required for a given job. "The cool thing," Byers says about these new techniques for synthesizing polymers, is that with the ability to "control them precisely [comes] an opportunity to discover something new." ■

David Levin is a Boston-based science writer.





DeJulio (left) and Salvatore at Tongal's Santa Monica headquarters.

## Got talent?

By Steve Oney

Crowdsourcers James DeJulio '97, Rob Salvatore '97, and Mark Burrell '97

One evening shortly after the 2015 Academy Awards ceremony, three black-tie-clad Boston College alumni stood on a red carpet in a Hollywood ballroom to bestow the Tongies, marble and brass statuettes of a hand clasp a lightning bolt, given to recognize creative excellence in the burgeoning field of crowdsourcing. James DeJulio, Rob Salvatore, and Mark Burrell are the founders of Tongal, a company that uses what DeJulio calls "creative populism" to produce content, chiefly in advertising but increasingly in entertainment.

Santa Monica-based Tongal, an eight-year-old firm with revenues of \$25 million and a client list that includes Lego, MasterCard, Tide, and McDonald's, bypasses ad agencies, instead posting open calls for pitch ideas from some 70,000 (and counting) visitors to its website. After an idea or two is selected and paid for, another call goes out, and aspirants from the stay-at-home screenwriter mom in Maine to the teenage director in Texas respond with digital storyboards and camera-ready scripts. Tongal and the corporate client select the winning entries, and the client funds production.

The three partners became friends as undergraduates—Salvatore at the Carroll School of Management; Burrell and

DeJulio as economics majors. In 2000, after working on and around Wall Street, they piled into an SUV and drove to Los Angeles. Burrell and DeJulio worked in film production, while Salvatore soon opted for an MBA at the University of Texas at Austin. In 2005 the three formed Half Shell Entertainment, an independent video production company. Two years later, influenced by *New Yorker* writer James Surowiecki's book *The Wisdom of Crowds*, they started Tongal (an anagram for 19th-century English statistician Francis Galton). "I'm the people person," says Burrell, who is in charge of sales and business development. "I love movies," says DeJulio, chief product officer. "I'm the voice of reason," adds Salvatore, the CEO.

In 2013, with some 750 projects behind them, they moved the company into its current 8,500-square-foot-space, next door to Twitter and within sight of the Pacific. There, DeJulio and Salvatore oversee 50 full-time employees. Burrell is based in New York. As for the partners' Hollywood dreams, they might be close. In January, the Sundance festival screened seven crowdsourced short films from Tongal.

Steve Oney is a Los Angeles-based writer.



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